

# LAY SERMONS

*By*

MARGOT ASQUITH

THE COUNTESS OF OXFORD AND ASQUITH



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I DEDICATE  
THIS BOOK  
TO MY SON  
ANTHONY

M. A.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
I CARELESSNESS . . . . .	II
II HEALTH . . . . .	31
III TASTE—PART I . . . . .	55
IV TASTE—PART II . . . . .	77
V FASHION . . . . .	103
VI HUMAN NATURE . . . . .	133
VII FAME . . . . .	155
VIII POLITICS . . . . .	175
IX OPPORTUNITIES . . . . .	199
X CHARACTER . . . . .	219
XI MARRIAGE . . . . .	239



I

CARELESSNESS



## CARELESSNESS

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”—*St. Paul.*

SOME years ago an enterprising American Journalist came to see me at the instigation of a common friend, not for the purpose of an “interview,” but to put before me certain proposals for which his firm was ready and eager to engage my services. He said I had great natural talent for writing, that I was neither dull nor diffuse, and that he had been in complete disagreement with the bulk of my critics who thought my Autobiography vulgar, frivolous, and indiscreet. He himself was a man of wide culture and deep thought, and was convinced that in time others would come to the same conclusion as himself and think me a great genius. Flattered but apprehensive, I dared not interrupt his fluent praise. He concluded by saying that

although I had finished my Autobiography it was a pity I should give up what I did so well, and suggested I should write another book, which should be a collection of what he called "low-down articles of an intimate kind."

I shrank from this description of what he thought the direction my talent ought to take.

Assuming an air of innocence, I asked if he thought "Detectives in Diplomacy," "Trips into Trousseaux," "Confessions of a Titled Temp-tress," "Peeps into Privacy," "The Fads of the Famous," "The Underwear of Queens," "Counter-charges on Cabinet Ministers," or "Chit-chat upon Crime," would be more appropriate titles for my peculiar style of writing.

I watched him closely while I was talking, and saw him prick up his ears when I had finished. At the back of his mind every topic I had suggested was exactly what he most wanted, and he was saying to himself, "This woman is a heaven-born journalist! What is there she could not tell us about Crime, Queens, Cabinets, Clothes, and the lower secrets of the upper classes! She evidently doesn't know her own powers, and

yet she seemed to enjoy what I said about her book, and they all say she is a tremendous egotist. Why not go a little further and flatter her? Unfortunately, I never read her book, and I don't know what she is *really* like, but my boss will be *furious* if, after all the fuss she made before consenting to see me this morning, I go back and say 'Nothing doing.' Is she the sort of woman I can flatter? . . . Is she the kind of woman one can bribe? . . . My boss never told me how much money he would give—she would ridicule a small and he might repudiate a large sum. . . . It's an awkward business! And if I don't walk warily, she'll escape me; anyway, it's no good having a thin skin. Flattery is a safe course to pursue with most women, so here goes!"

HE (*leaning forward with an earnest and ingratiating expression*): "You must be aware, Mrs. Asquith, that you have a world-wide reputation——"

M. (*reflectively*): "I can't remember ever hearing it before—would you really say . . .?"

HE (*eagerly interrupting*): "I repeat it—*world-wide*!"

M. : " One is often told the world is very small when you meet an undesirable acquaintance abroad."

HE (*solemnly*) : " Not *your* world, Mrs. Asquith . . . never *yours* ! "

I watched him visibly expanding, and answered:

" The world is round, and it is not easy for pedestrians to be sure whether they are going ahead or revolving in a circle."

HE : " That is too deep for me ! "

M. : " I would not go as far as to say that ! Do you really think I could write articles on all the subjects I suggested ? "

HE (*enchanted but uncertain*) : " Of course ! I don't *think* it, I know it. Come now, Mrs. Asquith ! we are wasting time. My firm could do a great deal for you. We Americans are a slap-up sort of people, very quick—I may say you are more like us than a Britisher—and I think we understand one another. Let's get to business. If you begin with ' Peeps into Privacy,' dealing with some of the great people you've known—Lord Northcliffe and Lord Kitchener or who you like—of 4,000 words delivered in at

fortnight, it would enhance my reputation and my boss would . . .”

I interrupted him: “You are very kind but not very serious! Are you sure you are not what is called pulling my leg? What do you really expect, and where do you propose to place these articles?”

His face fell; he got up, and after fumbling about in his overcoat, which was thrown over the chair, he pulled out a rolled-up magazine and said:

“We serialize in high-class periodicals here and in the States, and anything you write will be read by millions. I want you to give inside information upon private matters in which the public are always interested. Here, see!”

I looked at the yellow paper cover and saw an angry sun in a lemon sky, a waveless sea of cerulean blue, and a naked lady in a “picture hat” with a pink chiffon scarf thrown carelessly round her hips, sitting on the edge of a dangerous cliff smoking a cigarette. I felt as if my smile was a slow motion in a cinema, but said nothing. He realized that the number he had selected

—like No. 13—was unlucky, and that he had better have left it behind, but said quickly, “Oh! You mustn’t look at the cover, it’s different every month. The man who owns this runs fifty more highly popular periodicals. I picked this one up haphazard, as you might say, out of a pile. The cover is merely to catch the eye, and if you were in the trade you would not even notice it. You must never forget, Mrs. Asquith, that the public will always pay for what it is interested in——”

After an embarrassing pause I told him I was sorry, but I was not really the right person for him. That I was a miserable journalist, mentally deficient about what interested the public, and had always been puzzled to know why so many people wasted so much time reading so many papers. The enthusiasm died out of his face. He answered in a lower gear that I surprised him, and that I surely had been besieged all my life by publishers and pressmen. I assured him that this was not the case, and that until I had gone to America I had only been approached by cameras, with the unfortunate results that

he must often have observed ; and after a friendly finale we parted.

\* \* \* \* \*

In spite of giving myself airs over topics and titles, I am not sure that my ultimate choice for the name of this modest work is altogether happy. I might go further and say it is misleading. There is something pretentious in the word "sermon" which even the prefix "lay" does not completely obliterate ; but it is not easy to hit upon an appropriate title for my particular kind of writing, and I fear the word "sermon" will prejudice my readers.

In Roget's *Thesaurus of English Words* he gives several alternatives under the heading of "Sermon" : "Teach, instruct, edify, school, cram, prime, or coach" ; and on another page : "Hold forth, harangue, declaim, flourish, spout, rant, lecture, and expatiate." None of these words illustrate my intention. But there are many sermons that could be preached—not so much to extol the next world as to guide us in this ; and it is my unpretentious purpose to express as best I can some of these undelivered addresses.

It is training for this world that is so difficult, and it is a matter of unceasing surprise and speculation to me why so many people that I have personally known have—in what promised to be satisfactory lives—thrown away their health, their money, and their intellects. No one but a fool would speculate on why they have thrown away their hearts, and after a long acquaintance with city men it might be said that it is as interesting to speculate on how they ever came to make a fortune as it is to know how they lost it. But I am not going to dwell on the riddle of Success or the perversity of Failure, but am trying to estimate the little things that combine to make half the trouble and many of the muddles, if not misfortunes, of everyday life. Bad luck cannot account for all of these, and it is an excuse best left to gamblers—and even they would be well advised not to attribute their own self-indulgence and lack of respect for life to Luck.

If you probe the matter at all profoundly, you will find half the troubles, most of the accidents and many of the catastrophes come from carelessness. Carelessness is a difficult word to

analyse. It belongs to no particular category, and may be found equally distributed among the clever and the stupid, the weak and the strong, the drab and the famous, and men who have or have not got either character, intellect, or soul.

It does not come from lack of intellect: some of the most profound thinkers, the most learned philosophers and the greatest professors have been notorious for their absence of mind. I remember Mrs. Haldane—the famous and distinguished mother of the present Lord Haldane—telling me of a professor of science and a near relation of hers who had received from an eminent Russian doctor a specimen of skin off a man who had died of a rare and virulent type of smallpox. He placed it in the cardboard box upon his mantelpiece. While he was out walking, his wife—looking for something she had left in his room—opened the cardboard box, and caught smallpox.

Nor can Carelessness be attributed to lack of kindness or of skill, as some of the greatest surgeons have killed their patients, and the noblest

housemaids have set the house on fire. Nor can it be said to come from lack of imagination; as poets are proverbially inattentive to practical detail; and the artistic temperament has been known to land people in every kind of dilemma.

We all know what Carelessness is—and have suffered from it—but none of us know what it comes from, and we are forced to the trite conclusion that it is a serious defect which, for want of a more exact definition, we must call self-absorption, insensibility, or lack of Care.

A great and famous doctor once said to me: “There is not much difference between one doctor and another, Mrs. Asquith. Medicine can never be an exact science, as the few medicines worth using act differently on different individuals; but there is a difference—it is one of character or of Care. When I was a young man I had confined a woman in the ordinary ways of my practice. She was a healthy normal being, and her mother was anxious she should accompany her to the country. There was nothing in the state of her daughter’s health to which I could

take objection, but to be on the safe side I said :

“ ‘It is perhaps a little early, madam, but you can remove her at your own risk,’ to which she replied :

“ ‘Sir John Williams, you are a young man. Take the advice of an old woman. I do not pay a big fee to a great doctor to take any responsibility upon myself. Never let me hear of your saying what you have said to me again !’

It was a good lesson, and one I have never forgotten. A man came to see me the other day, after I had examined his wife, in a great rage. ‘My wife tells me you have examined her and say you do not know what is the matter with her ! Do you mean to tell me that when I have come all the way from the North at great trouble and expense to take her to the most famous woman’s doctor in London, you dismiss her like that !’ To which I replied : ‘I did not dismiss your wife, sir. I told her that she would have to be under my observation for more than half an hour ; but if you are not satisfied, you can take your

wife round the corner, where she will find twenty doctors who will tell her exactly what is wrong with her.' ”

There is a well-known story of a famous London West-End physician who was called in to see a millionaire. After making elaborate notes on all his self-starting symptoms, he wrote a long prescription, and, saying he would return in a week, he parted from his patient with a final injunction :

“ And don't forget, only *one* cigar ! ”

On his second visit, after inquiring how he was, the patient answered :

“ Well, doctor, I think I am really rather better, if it only wasn't for that damned cigar.”

It has been said—or perhaps it has not—that all of us would behave well in a crisis, whether in a fire, a shipwreck, a mob, or a burglary, but where nobility really comes in is in the daily experiences of ordinary life ; and here I am bound to say Carelessness makes things extraordinarily difficult even for the most heroic.

Sometimes to save time I invite friends to

dine with me or spend a week-end in the country in one and the same telephone message. This is forwarded on in the absence of my friend, and I get a telegram :

“Delighted to accept your kind invitation.—  
WILLY.”

It would add enormously to your London work if you had to write down every telephone message you sent, nor would it in this case have helped me. I rack my brains which “Willy” it can be, and to what I have invited him, and in the end he has to be either accommodated at the Fish Inn of Sutton Courtney village or make thirteen at the dinner-table in London.

I remember Sir William Harcourt telling me he had arranged with Lord Morley to meet and discuss the line they were jointly to take on a critical occasion before a meeting of the Cabinet. Harcourt was to let his colleague know, as at that time Elm Park Gardens always found Lord Morley, and Sir William’s movements were un-

certain. John Morley received a telegram from Sir William Harcourt saying :

“Will see you at House this afternoon.—  
HARCOURT.”

There were no motors in those days, and Morley—who was never very robust—had to drive down in a hansom to the House of Commons at great inconvenience, to find Sir William had gone to Fulham, having wired: “Will see you at home this afternoon.” This caused considerable delay and irritation.

The foreign habit of printing telegrams should be adopted in this country and every one should sign their name in full. Margot is not a very common name, but after being told that my telegrams arrived signed “Maggie” and “Maggot,” I never forget to add my surname.

There are other little social miseries liable to trouble one in the London season. Americans (who, we can say without fear of contradiction, are the most hospitable people in the world) who showed me every kindness during my stay

in their country, leave cards and flowers on me when they come to London. There is no address on any of the cards, and on inquiry I find that the American Embassy never heard of my friends. As Americans are restless travellers, and always in a hurry, by the time I have tracked them to the hotel in which they were staying they have gone to Paris, Florence, or Monte Carlo, and on their return to their own country it is repeated to me that they have said :

“ Well, we did think after the hen luncheons, the large dinners, the balls, the parties, and the motor drives we gave Mrs. Asquith when she was in the States, she might at least have returned our cards. But I suppose now she is a countess she looks down upon us.”

I am told—with what truth I do not know—that the Smith book- and newspaper-stalls at the railway-stations made their fortune through the carelessness of travellers with train fever, who in their fear of being late had left the book they were reading behind them, and arriving too early at the station were ready and willing to pay 6s. for a book whose market price was 4s. 6d.,

and I can only say I think Smith & Son showed laudable restraint in not charging more.

I entertain in my little country-house at Sutton Courtney what tradesmen call a "good class" of guest, but I have often wondered why they burn holes in the mantelpiece by forgotten cigarettes; break my saucers feeding their dogs; and never turn the electric light out when they go down to dinner or retire to bed. I sleep in a barn at the bottom of a garden path facing the house, and waking up at three one morning I observed a bright and flickering light in the windows of the bridge-room. I jumped out of bed, flung a coat over me, and, seizing a bath-towel, ran across the garden to The Wharf. When I opened the door I found the room full of smoke and the velvet cover of the bridge-table on fire. My guests who had been playing cards late into the night had turned out the electric light but forgotten the candles, one of which had guttered on to the table and ultimately fallen on to the cloth. The fire was easily extinguished, but I was glad the blinds had been drawn and the windows opened, or I should never have seen the light.

My friend Norman Holden said that one ought to have "trained guests," but the truth is, few people follow the nursery admonition and "stop to think." They leave candles lit, kettles hissing, doors open, lights on, letters undated, books out of doors, and wills of such unfathomable folly, that I have seen families ruined and lawyers enriched, by years of litigation after the deaths of both my friends and my relations.

These after all, are trivial matters, but there lies within them the germ that can generate terrible happenings. We can read with equanimity how some great crime—where the perpetrator has every reason to concentrate with exaggerated foresight and precision—has been detected by some trifling oversight, some non-completion, unconcern, or by whatever you like to call the Carelessness that has brought him to the gallows. But it is when you read of the great accidents, the collisions on railways, explosions in mines, foundering of ships, conflagrations in factories, and sudden deaths after successful operations that you shudder to learn after a careful and exhaustive inquiry that they were generally

due to some small and avoidable slip on the part of a single individual.

An undelivered key leading to a neglected signal, an unextinguished cigarette thrown among packing-cases, a fire lit with the blower down, a single pipe or unclosed lantern, a casual look at an obsolete chart, unlabelled bottles or forgotten sponges, may cause undreamt-of disaster.

To place reliance in oneself is necessary to all success, but over-confidence is generally met by a rebuff. Taking heed is what is needed, and this can only be obtained by an increased hold over yourself which will lead to a finer sensibility for other people.

II

HEALTH



## II

# HEALTH

“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”—*St. Paul.*

PEOPLE who do not read their Bible do not realize the common sense of the injunctions both of Christ and His apostles, and if the clergy were to lay more stress upon this they would not have such empty churches.

In quoting this simple sentence I am not going to write upon Love, or Forgiveness, or any moral aspect of the verse ; I propose to take it as a text upon Health.

“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath ” is not the counsel of a visionary. It is a practical prescription for restoration—a corrective, or form of physical healing. Something remote and ideal makes a stronger appeal to most of us than what is simple, practical, and at hand.

I remember President Wilson—when he

received the Freedom of the City of London in December, 1918—saying to me at the Mansion House, where we were waiting in the interval before the public luncheon :

“Whenever I say anything sensible, Mrs. Asquith, I am told it is not practical, and I am called an Idealist. Is it not more practical at this moment, when half the world lies in ruins, to prepare for Peace than for War ? ”

Believing as I do that the League of Nations was the only fine idea that emerged out of the horrible War, I answered :

“If the world had any insight, there is no gain-saying what you have said, Mr. President ; but for the time being it seems to have taken leave of its senses.”

Looking back upon this conversation to-day, no one will deny that much commercial, financial, and political trouble would have been averted if all the nations had combined to carry out the President's appeal. Weapons of war may be obsolete by the time they are needed ; and who can say if the next war will be in the air, on the land, or under the sea ? It is not only unques-

tionably right but it is much more practical to prepare for Peace. But in vain may you beg, plead, beseech, implore, and supplicate—nations are like individuals, and men who are convulsed with rage are usually blind of heart.

The word "idealism," when used by stupid people, is a term of contempt. It conveys to them something they will not believe in and do not want to do, and they hope to hide their selfishness by posing as men of the world, not to be hoodwinked by any such balderdash. What is good enough for the rest of mankind is good enough for them, and instead of saying "Fiddle-de-dee!" (or as the book has it: "Pish!" "Pho!" "Stuff!" "Bosh!" "Figs!"), they say with great solemnity, "There will always be wars as long as the world lasts and as long as men's tempers are what they are!"

I do not agree, because the same was said about duelling, and even in my lifetime men's tempers have improved. In old novels you read of people "being thrown into a ferment," "their gorge rising," "a light foam playing

on their lips," and the Psalmist talks of "gnashing of teeth." Few, if any of us, have witnessed these sorry exhibitions, and it is for this reason I say men have acquired more self-control.

It is not men's tempers alone that make war. It is not so simple as all that. It is national traditions, old controversies arising from rival claims to envied possessions, jealousies, ambitions, vanity, and—beyond all—long-drawn-out quarrels which probably could have been easily adjusted had they been bravely discussed at an earlier period.

If nations in times of excitement were led by men of discernment—anxious to find the truth rather than to score a triumph—instead of by agitators, who, from a perverted religion and truculent ruffianism, foment the quarrel, war would be made more difficult of achievement. Agitation in individuals upsets the digestion, just as much as it inflames a nation; and who can hope to sleep well or suspend judgment when the heart burns? We all know that hot blood engenders high words, and endless examples could be cited to show how much the body is

affected by the mind. All children are taught to say they are sorry after an exhibition of tantrums, and it should be the same with those who presume to be not only their elders, but their betters.

A good night's sleep may bring wisdom in the morning, and health is more important than dignity. In the long run what preys upon the mind is injurious to the body; and there is nothing so harmful to both the nerves and the constitution as the poison that comes from revenge, or the despair that follows upon remorse. Toxicology—or the science of poisons—is insufficiently studied by doctors and healers.

My doctor—Sir John Williams—once said to me :

“ You are not a robust woman, but you have the best sort of bad nerves. I am afraid doctors will not be able to do much for you in life, Mrs. Asquith. Why don't you try to observe the health and habits of other people, and in so doing learn something about yourself ? ”

From that moment I concentrated upon his advice, and commend it to my friends, as,

instead of being vetted like dumb animals and abusing their doctors for unsatisfactory results, they could—by intelligent information—assist in their own cures.

Not being in any way medically qualified, I can only write on what I have observed in the health and habits of other people, and what I have experienced myself.

If anyone versed in medical science reads what I am writing and “answers back” (as the nurses call it), I shall be incapable of giving them satisfaction, and it is more than probable that if courtesy demands a reply my vague and uncertain explanation may cause irritation.

Nature appears to me to be more anxious to heal than to destroy, and—except in cases of epidemics—most of our ailments come from self-indulgence, lack of observation, insensibility, and avoidable bad habits. I am not writing for the poorer classes—although they are careless and wasteful—because they have not enough money to build big windows or buy good food. Light, ventilation, heat, and diet are common-places for the well-to-do, the lack of which

accounts for many of the ailments of the poor. To compensate for these drawbacks, however, the poor—when not out of employment—have an enormous advantage over the idle rich (of whom one can say they are an insignificant minority to-day). This advantage is work. Regular work is more healthy than any rest-cure. There is rest in regularity, and a pride in achievement that makes both for good health and high spirits. Indeed, without paradox I can say that work is almost the only certain pleasure to be found in life. There is an unaccountable feeling of satisfaction in work, both while it is going on and when it is over, that makes up for all the bad plays, dull balls, blank days, lost races, long speeches, platitudes, and fallacies that fill the days and warp the nights of many intelligent people addicted to pleasure.

Most of the minor ailments—particularly among women—debility, anæmia, nerves, vapours, and indigestion—come from lack of occupation. This was noticeable during the War, when females who had never been tired of discussing their symptoms worked like beavers,

and what with little sleep and less food added 50 per cent. to their general health.

Regularity of habit is like rhythm in music, and if you are musical you will know what that means. I find the rhythm even of a barrel-organ in the Mews often rather stimulating; and there is nothing more exhilarating than marching in step to a military band. It is an exhilaration not only felt by the soldiers but exemplified by the people that you can see any day of the week accompanying drums and trumpets along the high-roads and on the pavements.

The reason that small children clamour to hear the same story told in the same words is that the regularity or rhythm gives them a sense of security. If doctors had the wits to suggest work instead of rest, their commendations would have immediate results. Unfortunately, it is the fashion among medical men to-day to say we are all overworked, and their mistaken guidance finds many a fool to follow them. From my own observation I can truly say few, if any, normal beings that I have ever known have been hurt by too much work.

If I am not writing for the lower classes, I am writing for all the others, and I am not at all sure that the ignorance among the poor is more conspicuous than the recklessness among the rich.

Most men and women Eat, Drink, and Sleep too much to keep their minds active or their bodies healthy. Children are seldom as greedy as grown-up people, and know with greater precision when they have eaten enough. I am amazed by observing how much time people spend of their lives in eating and drinking : and how careless they are as to what they swallow. They wi'll pile their plates with bright green peas and india-rubber mushrooms out of tins with a courage that deserves the Victoria Cross, and are surprised when their stomachs ache or their complexions become like solitaire boards.

It is an undisputed fact that the more you eat the more you want to eat, and starvation—though not recognized by doctors—is a safe cure for half the maladies that attack mankind. I do not think there are any societies to prevent people from overeating, but it is high time that

some of the enthusiastic fanaticism levelled against alcohol should be enlisted against meat.

Coming, as I shall later, to the question of drink, I can only say I have met among my teetotal friends men who, while preaching abstinence, were far from healthy, being corpulent, noisy, and gluttonous.

The rich and vain, finding themselves growing fat, empty their stomachs once a year in Germany, but having thus salved their conscience and diminished their weight, they return to the same way of living as they did before, and I have hardly a friend or a contemporary who has preserved an active and elastic figure.

In this country you can write, talk, and speak in public about birth-control, unnatural vices, and venereal diseases—almost any eschewed subject—but you may not mention constipation, and yet no one of any experience will deny that most of our bodily sufferings come from insufficient drainage, and poisoned intestines. You may evade, elude, or fight shy of this proposition, but sooner or later you will have to face it. The average person in my class (what-

ever that may be) has three if not four meals a day—breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner ; some have no tea, and some have late supper instead of dinner ; but be that as it may, they fill their stomachs three times a day, and think themselves injured if they do not spend at least eight hours in bed, whether awake or asleep. In spite of this, whether from lack of care or culpable ignorance, nature is solicited capriciously, with the most disastrous consequences. Busy men and lazy women are unable to take enough exercise to open the pores of their skins, and an unobserved but steady process of poisoning sets in which is the starting-point of many of the maladies which prove fatal in later life.

When you hear of cancer-houses, you ask about the drains ; but it would be more to the purpose to ask about the drainage of the victims than of the building. We may be on the eve of a great scientific discovery in connection with cancer, but in the meantime little is known about it. It is a step forward to learn in what part of the world certain intestinal afflictions seldom occur, and it is possible that, if people

were more observant and at an early stage of cancer could be influenced to tell men of science as much as they could of their diet and habits, it would be more valuable than all the experiments made upon rats and rabbits.

After the age of forty no one needs as much food, drink, or sleep as they did in their youth. It is a platitude to say there are exceptions ; but when middle-aged people tell me they could not live without eight or nine hours' sleep, I answer they should be grateful if they can get six, and seven is quite enough for the majority of mankind. Bad nerves are not so much rejuvenated by sleep as by fresh air and a kind of repose that—though difficult—can be cultivated. Some of the strongest people I have known have been bad sleepers, and nothing conduces so much to healthy sleep as well-regulated bowels.

The Lord Mayor of Cork lived from the 12th of August, 1920, till the 25th of October of the same year without food, but he was kept warm in bed and his doctors gave him mild aperients. Reading this made me realize for the first time that if eating nothing could accumulate poison,

how much more danger there must be in over-feeding.

Holy men in monasteries live to a ripe old age and spend most of their nights in prayer or meditation, and some of them are highly intelligent, whereas animals are asleep for longer hours than they are awake.

Although sleeping too much cannot be said to be a danger, it is certainly a disadvantage.

I read the other day in a newspaper :

“Experiments have been conducted at the George Washington University in New York, with a specially selected group of psychologists, showing that lack of sleep, while temporarily inconvenient, leaves no lasting effects. The belief of an increasing number of American psychologists that the human race sleeps too much seems to be confirmed by the present experiments. It is their growing contention that people sleep more to overcome the *ennui* of keeping awake and having nothing to do than to recuperate their physical powers.”

I do not agree with these American gentlemen that it is boredom that makes people stay in bed. It is self-indulgence and a bad habit ; and just as there are habits of mind that sterilize the intellect, so there are habits of body which impair the health. Nevertheless, to be attacked

by insomnia for any length of time is a terrible trial, and I shall never forget what I myself suffered from it for a period of three successive years. My weight was reduced to under seven stone, and I dreaded the approach of night as much as children dread the tigers they conjure up when left by themselves in the dark. My nerves quivered and eyes burned, added to which I suffered from colitis, encouraged by an undiscovered form of pyorrhœa, which was accompanied by lack of articulation or occasional inability to speak—a humiliating affliction, diagnosed by the doctors as Aphonia. There is no illness or operation that I have ever been through that I would not gladly face rather than a recurrence of those sleepless years. Every conceivable narcotic was tried upon me; but although some of them were a temporary alleviation, drugs dry the throat, lower the vitality, and as aids to sleep are by no means reliable. They also have a curious effect upon the character, as, by weakening the resolution, they undermine your confidence and retard the best chance you have of assisting in your own re-

covery. There is no mental process that will help you, such as counting sheep going through a gate or saying the alphabet backwards. Living out of doors, undressing before a fire, and sleeping in a cold bedroom with open windows and light blankets had a mild effect upon my sleep. But what really helped me more than anything else was when the station-master in Edinburgh told me I ought to be grateful and not repine, as he had never allowed himself to sleep for more than four hours. Sleep, like everything else, is a matter of habit, and although one can lay down no fixed rules, the more you accustom yourself to do without it the more alert you will be.

There are different qualities in sleep as in other things. It should not be a disturbance of wakefulness, but a withdrawal from work ; and if the mind is agitated and the heart heavy the longest hours of sleep will neither refresh nor invigorate you.

Drink is a much more difficult question, and although it has decreased in my lifetime there is more than enough intemperance to cause

infinite misery, as well as sapping the energies and undermining the constitution of a majority of the lower classes.

Visiting as I did most of the convict prisons when my husband was Home Secretary, I found the bulk of the prisoners were detained for crimes of violence, most of which were committed under the influence of alcohol. The problem of drink has been approached with too much vehemence and prejudice ever to be dispassionately solved ; but, whether rightly or wrongly, temperance fanatics are associated in the public mind with kill-joys, and this makes them misunderstood. Pleasure will always make a stronger appeal than Wisdom, and the average man is not going to be debarred from what he looks upon as an inalienable right to do what he likes with his money and his leisure.

Our Lord turned water into wine ; and although I am insufficiently educated to know, I do not think any of the great teachers or philosophers ever put a ban on the merry-making which is usually associated with a certain amount of wine.

If the majority of people, both rich and poor, did not drink too much, brandy would be looked upon as a medicine, and one that, under certain conditions, is safe to give even to the youngest child.

It is not from frivolity or vulgarity that audiences of every nationality from time immemorial have laughed at drunkards on the stage. To the average man there is something droll and jolly in seeing the gyrations of a gentleman in his cups (though personally they seldom make me smile). If drunkenness is dramatically introduced as the turning-point upon which hangs some critical and poignant decision in a play, it awakens pity, and it is a platitude to say that laughter is akin to tears.

It is of no use preaching Prohibition, because you are not going to get it in this country. Drink can only be cured by providing more fun for the lower classes, and what should be encouraged is Perspiration. Dancing should be taught in every village; it is cheap and popular, and the modern steps so meaningless, motionless, and simple that men and women, however old or

clumsy, can master them. Physical exercises circulate the blood and raise the spirits, and familiar tunes awaken a kind of common emotion that gives pleasure to people who are assembled together.

If half the public-houses were replaced by dancing-saloons—where non-alcoholic drinks were sold—there would be a marked decrease in drunkenness.

In my youth many men of great promise—poets, painters, and politicians—and nearly all good servants, were ruined by drink; but although this is not the case to-day, every one drinks too much. There is nothing so fattening as champagne; and however little brandy or whisky may be put into big glasses, the soda-water that accompanies it is inclined to disturb the digestion, swell the figure, and ruin the complexion.

When diet, waters, doctors, and drugs have failed, “Suggestion” is proposed. I do not know how experts define suggestion, but, roughly speaking, it means looking at one thing and thinking of another, or something said that

awakens something different, and starts a train of thought which disentangles the mind and restores the nerves.

This was the origin and design of those who launched Christian Science, and no doubt if it had remained in its inception it would have been not only a platitude but a benefit : unfortunately, in its development, Christian Science has arrogated to itself powers of healing which are contradictory to common sense.

Ever since the world was inhabited men have interpreted God differently—one may say, without irreverence, that God has been made in the image of man—but the Christian Scientists have made Him in the image of woman. You might have supposed that, not being gifted with the highest kind of imagination, women would have armed themselves with penetrating logic ; but Christian Science undeceives you. Pushed to its logical conclusion, you can jump off a roof without being hurt. The practice of it never makes you sensible and seldom makes you kind. In my own experience I have seen it separate the dying from their parents, the loving from their

loved ; and, by ignoring the discoveries that have inspired generations of scientific men for the alleviation of human suffering, it has irritated the living, imposed upon the dying, and shortened life. I hope I am tolerant of all creeds and faiths, and I do not suppose the Almighty cares by which road we come to Him as long as we come ; nevertheless, there is a fine sound in the words "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me" ; and we need not presume that because God is good He is good-natured.

But neither Faith-cures, Gold-cures, Rest-cures, cures in Germany, Sanatoria, Suggestion, or Doctors will ensure health. Nor can anything avail the nerves, the mind, or the body when tempers have been aroused. There is only one form of suggestion that never fails, and that is embodied in my text which forbids you to withhold forgiveness.

Most of us say the Lord's Prayer, where we pray to be delivered from evil. There is no greater evil than the quarrels that annihilate friendship, injure health, divide society, destroy trade, set nations one against the other, and end in War.

When there are so many natural and unavoidable causes for sorrow—separations that are inevitable, deaths that divide us by an inscrutable silence, hopes that are frustrated, faiths that are enfeebled—why add to them by pride and a stubborn resolve never to acknowledge yourself in the wrong?

Why let the sun go down upon your wrath?



III

TASTE

PART I



### III

## TASTE

### PART I

“We live by admiration.”—*Wordsworth*.

BACON says, “The nobler a soul the more objects of compassion it hath.” In like manner one might say—the greater the artist the more he will find to admire.

The capacity to admire is rare—even rarer than the capacity to enjoy. *Joie de vivre*—one of the many good expressions the French use to make up for a thin language—is a form of animal exuberance to which the whole world, rich and poor, bond and free, is susceptible. Men and women of leathery hearts, stodgy minds, and frail bodies feel an unaccountable stimulus when they have been in the company of high vitality, and you will not infrequently hear old-fashioned and even prudish persons say :

“I know he is a blackguard, and would cheat his best friend; but I do *love* his *joie de vivre*, it's so infectious!” Admiration is of a much subtler and finer texture; it testifies to what is both spiritual and intellectual in human beings, and is only to be found among the richest natures. It is not infectious. On the contrary, it acts as a challenge to people whose conversational supremacy depends upon witty disparagement, and as an irritant on the dull of soul. When Wordsworth said, “We live by admiration,” he enunciated a profound truth.

To be with people who see without perceiving, hear without listening, talk without thinking, listen without clapping, often copy, seldom praise, and never admire, has an effect upon me that is almost physical. I can remember crying as a little girl, and wincing at a later period, when I had listened to a clatter of criticism which was wholly condemnatory. “Crabbing youth and age” cannot live together, as my friend Lord Kilbracken once wrote to me; but though young people are proverbially intol-

erant, there are tongues that retain their poison long after youth has passed.

The time I am not devoting to work, rest, or pleasure I like spending not only with enthusiasts but with sound critics to whom everything—from a shed in a sunset to a wheel on a rail—is of interest. And with men of taste.

These are rare, because while you can increase knowledge and improve your powers of observation, unless you are born with taste it is difficult though possible to acquire. “Minds that have nothing to confer find little to perceive.” As a means to acquiring taste I recommend cultivating, first, its positive side—the power of appreciation—and later its negative and purely discriminative side.

You cannot begin too early to exercise an independent judgment, and admiration will enable you to possess treasures of which no one can rob you, although you may never be rich enough to possess them.

I have known many great collectors—rich men and men of leisure—who have bought pictures, houses, furniture, tapestries, bronzes,

and works of art of every kind, but hardly any of them have had taste. Selection, arrangement, spacing, lighting, line, design, and right relation of colour are unknown to them. I found a Burne-Jones—an artist to whom Nature was brutal, love had no sex, and birds were prophets—with his delicate sense of beauty, symbol, and design, hung next to the indomitable irony, mystery, and drama of a Daumier; a melting sugary Greuze child near a Van Gogh, and in close proximity to Augustus John a flawless portrait by Ingres. Pictures thus hung jarred and challenged, added to which they were placed where the curtains fought against the furniture, and the carpets warred against the walls, in rooms where draughts, dados, and lack of intimacy made you feel you were in a Pantechnicon. It is not only among the zealous buyers of the new rich, but the proud possessors of old places that you will find this lack; and, in an age where taste is as much the fashion as intellect was at the time my friends and I were called “Souls,” it is a matter of surprise that so many of the inheritors of beautiful houses have got

so little. Were it not that few of these possessed fortunes, and many had little enterprise, we should not be in a position to admire the beauties of half the fine country-houses that are in these islands to-day.

Most people are too careless to notice what they have been surrounded by since their youth, or too absorbed in the routine of their habits and occupations to cultivate æsthetic observation; and the majority—having few ideas of their own—can only earn a reputation for taste by copying what they admire in the houses of their friends. The instinct to copy is natural, but it is one I shrink from; for if carried to excess it deprives you of a keen pleasure, and not only prevents you from finding out what you like but checks the development of your own natural taste.

Although imitation is a sincere form of flattery it is a tiresome tribute to all but the very vain. Up to a certain point copying is legitimate, but it is better to be a pioneer than a passenger, and best of all to try and Create.

Most of us admire what we possess ourselves

more than the possessions of other people, and are inclined, when asked what we think, to extend cautious condemnation or tepid praise, neither of which is of much value to others. What is needed in sincere criticism is intellectual courtesy, an alternative suggestion, and an elastic mind, always remembering it is possible to be a sharp critic and a bad judge.

If you hold strong opinions and are very much in earnest you will probably be called a prig, but a sense of humour and proportion should preserve you from this. Unfortunately, it is just this sense of proportion which is rare in critics, because they are apt to be more interested in their own opinions than the object they are criticizing, and if you try and bring them back to the object by interrupting the flow of their discourse you are inviting a personal rebuff.

It is always a difficult matter to know how seriously one should take oneself in life. You look among your acquaintances and wonder which bore you most, those who *do* or those who do *not* take themselves seriously. Forced to make a choice, most of us would say :

“Oh! give me a sense of humour above *everything* else—there is *nothing* so tiresome as people who take themselves too seriously.”

But speaking from my own experience I think in the long run the people who neither take themselves or anything else seriously are the most exhausting to be with; nor can you be sure that even the sense of humour which has pleased you will be applied with the same precision to themselves. The late Lord Curzon—and others I could mention—had an excellent sense of humour, but one of the difficulties of retaining one's friendship with him was that he seldom applied it to himself. Expressionists—by which I mean people whose words are weightier than their thoughts—will narrate in a brilliant and disarming fashion some personal experience in which they have not merely failed to distinguish themselves but have succeeded in being ridiculous. If you join in the joke for a moment longer than they have anticipated—and with possibly as much wit—you have affronted them, and you realize a little late that, although they have put themselves up

for auction, they will always buy themselves in again. Even the humorous may let you down.

In spite of this, it is evident that to achieve anything in life you must take—if not your Self—your Convictions seriously; and it is just this difference which makes it important that when you are arguing to defend your opinions you must make your opponents feel that you are trying to find and express the truth and not to score off them. It is not so much cleverness as the capacity to understand the other person's point of view, and the sincerity with which you hold your own, that will give you authority.

There is nothing so difficult as to get rid of one's Self when asked to criticize a new kind of work of Art—something with which you are not familiar and see for the first time—whether it is pictures, plays, music, or sculpture. You may say you do not want in any way to modify your Self. You are not there to suit the artist or the author: he is there for you to pronounce judgment upon, and the stronger you feel—or as the moderns put it, the greater your reaction

—the more valuable your opinion. But a fixed mind is not a good foundation for an impartial opinion. The first time you go to a Tchekov play, see Epstein's sculpture, look at Van Gogh's pictures, or hear the *Sacré du Printemps*, you will certainly miss something, and consequently have to reconsider a hasty judgment. Not that these artists are gods to dethrone or to enshrine, as much of their work is violent, childish, and ugly, but greater artists than they have been uneven. To apportion praise only to what you are familiar with is not going to increase the value of your criticisms. Everything new in Art or Literature requires a long exposure to the mind.

It is snobbishness and fashion that make critics so violent and so enclosed.

Jane Austen writes : " Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the *Baronetage*."

There are snobs in every department of life. Sport-snobs, Court-snobs, Lion-snobs, Literary-snobs, Art-snobs, and Critic-snobs. To retain

your power of admiration in advancing years, without having your hand forced by fashion, or your temper deflected by argument, it is wiser to suspend judgment till you have enlarged your experience.

What I personally find provoking in modern Art is that it is too clever, and lays an insistent emphasis on what is distorted and ugly, which neither the Greeks, Chinese, or Egyptians would have tolerated for a moment. To show truth and sincerity is more important than to evoke surprise; and though truth may be hidden, it is to divers in deep waters that we owe most.

There is as much fashion in taste as in clothes, and the pioneers of Art have always met with ridicule if not with indignation. The Greenery Yallery, Grosvenor Gallery School of the 80's caricatured by Gilbert and Sullivan, and expounded and developed by Morris, Rossetti, and Burne-Jones, made a profound and much-needed inroad on the taste of the day. The poetical artificiality of Morris's decoration soon acquired prestige of its own, and his disciples had the satisfaction of knowing that every one

recognized them as the elect. He not only made designs but he sold stuffs. I remember with what delight I gazed at the crewel-worked sunflowers on what was called art-serge, that dripped over my bedroom mantelpiece at Glen, and with what exasperation my father inveighed against the first Morris carpet and burst-pomegranate wall-paper that my sister Laura and I introduced. Nor can I forget the horror with which our suggestion was met that the brilliant yellow varnish on the handsomely carved oak of the front hall and billiard-room should be removed by some chemical process.

The careful painting and spiritual imagination of the Pre-Raphaelites met with scorn in its day, and Charles Dickens made a savage attack in *Household Words* on Millais' "Carpenter's Shop," painted when he was twenty, for which the Tate Gallery gave £10,000 not very long ago.

In every generation the old have made the same complaint about the new. I am told that the earliest writing upon stone decipherable to scholars is the lament of an Egyptian king

over the demoralizing changes that had taken place between his own youth and his children's. Elderly men can be heard any day in the week echoing the reflections of the Egyptian king : Art has degenerated, society as they knew it has ceased to exist, young men have no manners, young women no morals, politicians are rogues, lawyers are liars, there is no public opinion, the city is crumbling, and the country is going to the dogs. But I have lived long enough to turn a deaf ear to these rumblings, and to scrutinize closely the people who utter them. They are usually men who have done nothing for other people, or have failed to achieve anything for themselves in life.

I read in a novel by Cherbuliez, "*Seulement Dieu et les sots ne changent jamais*" ; and I expect he was not the first person to say it.

At the moment of writing there is a childish controversy started by elderly critics and developed in the House of Commons, on the merits and demerits of the Hudson memorial in Hyde Park by Epstein. I was approached by enthusiastic and indignant gentlemen to sign letters to the

Press, both to remove and retain this piece of sculpture ; but as our main thoroughfares bristle with formidable memorials of the most provocative, photographic, and foolish nature against which no one has raised a whimper, I did not feel moved to join in any "pilgrimage of passion" (to quote Disraeli). We cannot return to "The Lost Chord," "Last bark," "Twice bit" sort of picture which found favour with the Royal Academicians of the 80's. The only criticism I have to make on the "Rima" is that the top of her forehead being sloped off gives a foolish expression which diminishes the energy of the whole, and lends too much importance to her pear-shaped stomach ; nor does there seem sufficient reason for making her hands so very powerful ; otherwise the birds and branches make a sort of appeal which is interesting. But be this as it may, it cannot offend, as it is so situated as to be hidden from the public eye, which is more than one can say of Sir Wilfrid Lawson's baggy bronze trousers on the Embankment, the dummy howitzer on the Artillery Memorial, or the Tussaud reproduction

of poor Nurse Cavell. In these controversies I am reminded of the weather chart: "Winds will freshen in all districts and reach gale force locally."

It is dangerous to express strong opinions on new developments with which we are unfamiliar, and all of us can recall classical instances of mistaken contemporary criticism. Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* on Wordsworth: "This will never do." *Lohengrin* and *Carmen*, which were hissed off the stage; musicians dying of starvation; and painters, whose pictures bring fabulous prices to-day, who lived all their lives without public recognition. The statue of David at Florence begun by Mèro da Fiésoli and finished by Michelangelo was stoned by the populace on the morning it was unveiled, and had to be protected by the Civic Guards night and day. There are countless examples of changes of taste and opinion which should serve as a warning to keep a fresh eye and give posterity a chance.

Collectors and critics are as vain of their opinions as they are of their possessions, and would rather have their honour suspected than

their judgment ; nor will they admit the possibility that they may be under-estimating, because they do not understand. They have made a study of Art and have infinite knowledge ; they have bought—on their own judgment—houses, pictures, furniture, and other things of value for small sums, and have a deep-rooted conviction that their prescience has gained for themselves an unchallengeable position from which they cannot be ousted. They consider themselves privileged to impose their opinions on the awed admirers among their less-confident companions. You find these critics equally distributed among the old and the new, the men who think Beethoven a back number and Cézanne a dauber, and it is hard to say which of the two pronounces the silliest judgments.

There is nothing more common than to meet critics who think they enhance their own reputation and the prestige of their purchases by casting doubt on the authenticity of every other work of art that they are shown.

An eminent critic came to look at the pictures at Gosford, where I was staying with the late

Lord Wemyss many years ago. He was a man of profound knowledge and European reputation, who was constantly implored by private collectors and public Galleries to pronounce judgment on either what they had bought or what they proposed to acquire. Both my host and his guests looked forward to his visit with a pleasure amounting to excitement.

As he was driving over from a country-house in the neighbourhood the hour of his arrival was uncertain, and the present Lord Wemyss, his brother, Evan Charteris, and his father were out when their distinguished guest was announced. I was the only person in the room, and not wishing him to see anything till the return of his hosts I suggested I should take him for a walk before lunch.

It was one of those radiant days peculiar to the lovely coast between Edinburgh and Dunbar, and I felt an illegitimate pride in being the first to show this famous lover of Art such inexpressible beauty. We walked through the wind-swept trees across the open road to the Kilspindie golf-course, and sat down upon the

rocks. We watched the slow motion of the gulls and listened to the cry of the peewits overhead.

He talked freely of Florence and America, clasping his knees with both his hands, his whole attention riveted on what he was saying.

“It is a common error to attribute to Ucello the earliest examples of perspective in painting. The Berlin Art critic—of whom no doubt, Miss Tennant, you have heard—the great Dr. Bode and I are not in complete agreement . . .”

At this moment we were interrupted by loud cries of “Fore! . . . Fore!! . . .” and touching my companion I said we were in the way of the golfers and would have to move farther down the rocks towards the sea. A heron rose lazily at our feet, but the Art critic never looked away from the pattern on his trousers, and my attention wandered from his fluency on the Florentines, across the sands to the long silver sea-line broken by a blue Edinburgh. We retraced our steps and were greeted by our distinguished host, who—with a courtesy and enthusiasm peculiarly his own—conducted us into the dining-room.

When Lord Wemyss—who was in high spirits—informed the table that £4,000 had covered the whole of his purchases, including the Donatello bas-relief of St. Cecilia, I saw a slow look of shrewd and patronizing pleasure come into the face of the critic, and I regretted his lordship's loquacity. After lunch we walked round the galleries and sitting-rooms to look at the pictures. Giving his reasons at great length the confident critic disputed the authenticity of nearly every picture he was shown, provoking his host to a pitch of excitement that went to my heart. How little it mattered whether Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*, or another man of the same name ! The Gosford collection was so fine that I deplored the lack of taste in a critic who disparaged pictures—beautiful in themselves—because the attributions were not to his liking. It was borne in upon me that afternoon that neither education, reason, or research can make a critic. Learning is a poor substitute for Taste.

I have arrived at an age when I never ask if anything I want to purchase is genuine or

faked, modern or antique. I do not buy with a view to selling again. In the matter of pictures, having been brought up surrounded by the most beautiful of the English school, I prefer—apart from favourite masterpieces—a certain character and quaintness, and the colouring that seems most to harmonize with my rooms, to the most expensive pictures. Best-sellers do not appeal to me, and the price of any work of art is the most irrelevant fact about it.



IV

TASTE

PART II



## IV

# TASTE

## PART II

**T**ASTE covers such a large canvas that I have divided my discourse, and I will open this second and last part on a matter of minor importance, but one upon which I set great store.

I am not alone in wondering who it is that controls the taste and activities of our big cities to-day. Whoever they are, they appear to be blind or indifferent to what is either beautiful or historical. Jungles of ivy and virginia creeper are eating into the heart and submerging the stonework of all that is most precious in Oxford, Cambridge, Eton, Winchester, and many other towns. You cannot, alas! prevent private houses being ruined by the stupidity and ignorance of their owners who plant these defacing

weeds ; but one might have supposed that printed and written protests on this subject made over a long period would ultimately reach some tribunal that would deal with them. The bare walls of a brick factory set in a mill-stream are more pleasing to the eye, and less irritating to the æsthetic taste, than the oldest archway weighed down by ivy, or the finest stonework choked by creepers. It would be interesting to know on whose authority the work of a man like Nash—who planned Regent Street—has been demolished. The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments deserves our eternal gratitude, but I only wish it could have its powers extended, and be let loose over half our villages and most of our towns. Mr. Birrell once said to me he thought at least twice a year famous men of the day should be invited to perform the ceremony of veiling some of our superfluous monuments, and no one can doubt that crowds of people would be willing and eager to attend.

Untold gold has been and will be spent on erections inspired by sentiment, planned without knowledge and executed without the approva

of qualified persons. We can only be grateful for the beautiful equestrian statue of Charles the First, although its surroundings are not happy, and at any moment the sanitary inspectors may agitate for its removal.

Space in our big towns is so limited and valuable, and tradition so historical and venerable, that the time has surely come when either a new body should be given powers to deal with these matters or the Government of the day should be held responsible for all further disfigurements. It should not pass the wit of man to appoint a Committee of qualified persons to supervise designs, and give counsel to innovators on alterations which, when accomplished, may affront the eye and wound the susceptibilities of most of those whose opinion is worth having. The only condition I would make would be that no one connected with Education should be put upon the Committee, as private schools, public schools, colleges and universities are nearly always smothered with ivy and virginia creeper.

The truth is most people—if they only knew

it—are unobservant; and even when they have Taste, specialize so much upon what they are interested in, and what they are collecting, that they are insensible to a slow growth of ugliness that is going on at their gates.

The passion for collecting starts early, but fades with advancing years, and I am pretty certain that if you want to increase your powers of observation and develop your Taste, some part of your leisure should be spent alone, and every one should collect something.

You will see business men concentrated upon making money—a pursuit more than any other which, while increasing shrewdness, impoverishes the intellect. They lose their interest in society, and drop the pursuits of their youth. The excitement of speculation, and fatigue of long hours in the City, make them insensible to good conversation, indifferent to prowess in games, and incapable of reading interesting books. When they were young they collected various things: stones, stamps, crests, shells, and even bus tickets; but as they grew older these collections disappeared, and with them all the keen-

ness they had had in healthy competition. Were it not that you occasionally find the chief relaxation of such men is collecting works of Art, Age—which usually walks at a fairly even pace—hurries at the sight of a possible victim, and will certainly overtake him.

Taste, which of necessity inspires praise, prolongs life to an incredible degree, and I have come to the definite conclusion that *l'âge dangereux*—to which writers have devoted so much time and thought, is the age when people become cautious, commonplace, and shrewd.

I am reminded in this connection of an incident which was told me when I was travelling in the United States.

A rich American—bent on acquiring Old Masters—while travelling in the less-frequented towns of Italy, visited a curiosity shop of unpretentious demeanour. On finding the door would not open, the proprietor told him it was jammed by an old picture, which he would remove.

When this had been accomplished the American took the picture to the light and examined it. The dealer—who was keeping his buyer

under close observation—told him between puffs of an unsavoury cheroot that he had bought it many years before at a famous auction in a Florentine Palazzo. It had belonged to a decadent descendant of a Colonna, and was one of an odd lot for which he had paid uneven prices.

The American asked if anyone had seen the picture, and the dealer said he had once shown it to a connoisseur, who had offered him a fabulous price, but at that time trade was good and he had not contemplated parting with his purchase. Even now he was not really keen to sell it.

After some discussion the dealer was over-persuaded, and the delighted millionaire acquired the picture for £5,000.

On arriving in New York he was persuaded by his friends to send his masterpiece to be cleaned. After an interval of a few days, the cleaner told him that he had discovered, after removing some of the dirt, that there was another picture under the varnish, and asked whether he should continue the process of cleaning. The

American—who had been called to Washington—on receiving the letter telegraphed that he was to go on, and that he would come round himself to inspect progress the moment he returned.

When he arrived in New York he was shown for his inspection a half-length portrait of Garibaldi.

I will relate an experience of my own in connection with a famous dealer in the 80's, from whom my father and many rich men bought most of their best pictures.

A millionaire of my acquaintance, having purchased a house in Grosvenor Square, determined to beautify its rather commonplace proportions by buying pictures. His Taste, though good, was inexperienced, and he was biased in favour of full-length portraits by painters of the English school. The neat intimacy, material observation, and masterly execution, of the Dutch left him cold; the French befrilled and furbelowed ladies, exposing rosy bosoms to woodland swains, made no appeal to him; the coloured imagination of Turner was reck-

less lunacy ; of the moderns he was ignorant, and the early Italian Madonnas were as wearisome to him as Sundays in Scotland.

One day, having received an urgent letter—a pompous mixture of invitation and command—to see a Reynolds, he asked me to accompany him to the famous shop and tell him what I thought of the picture.

The dealer, a florid man, in a shiny chimney-pot hat and flowing black frock-coat, greeted us with a mixture of condescension and pomp, great mystery and a certain confidential familiarity. We were shown into a room with a top light and red hangings round the walls. On an easel, in isolated splendour—screened like an Oriental lady behind the purdah—stood a vast picture. Our showman closed the door silently, and opened the conversation as if he were perorating. He said he was well aware that, when he sent for my friend, he was trespassing against the laws of secrecy, but in the interests of Art, and secure in the discretion of his client, he would not have felt justified had he done otherwise. At this he whispered

something in my friend's ear, which I was not intended to hear, and continued :

“ Before showing you this magnificent specimen of the greatest of all Masters, I must tell you only two people have seen it—Lord A. and Mr. B.—and although some day I hope to be released from my promise, I am not in a position to-day to tell you how it came to be in my possession. There is no price for a picture of this kind, but though we dealers must live, I have taken such a fancy to the lady that I am in two minds whether I will part with her. Neither Lord A. nor Mr. B. know much about pictures ; and they would not give the money.”

He pulled himself up with a pained but interested expression, and at great length explained how in consequence of this parsimony, both these gentlemen had missed most of the fine pictures that had been sold in recent years, all of which I need hardly say my friend had acquired ; continuing he said :

“ No collection, my lord—I beg your pardon, Sir—no, not even *yours*—is perfect without

two full-length Sir Joshua's. Some men come to me and say, 'But I have no room in my house to hang them!' I shrug my shoulders at this and say, '*Make* room, Sir!! *Make* room!! Art is a jealous mistress and expects to be faithfully worshipped; or you will find yourself the possessor of a lot of second-rate pictures.'"

Changing his tone, and hooking his arm through my friend's, he dropped his voice and said :

"The Earl of —— strolled in here yesterday afternoon on his way to the Upper House and stood talking of fashion in pictures. He said he was surprised at the high prices the English school commanded to-day, and wondered if England was not getting rich. I demurred, and said that many of the old families were too poor to keep their works of art, and if only people had taste and foresight there never was a greater opportunity than there is to-day of acquiring pictures which will probably never be in the market again. He was much struck and gave me an order to give him the first

refusal of all the full-length portraits of the great English Masters that I could find. I said I would do what I could for him, but the whole Peerage would not make me forget my old friends, and that is why I sent for you this morning."

I saw the hook well in my friend. Just as my patience was coming to an end, the door opened noiselessly and two gentleman-like henchmen came in and, after removing the hangings, we were confronted with the picture. It was the usual full-length draped female figure with shoulders like a hock-bottle, and an attenuated arm leaning in a graceful attitude over a broken column, with a background of wild landscape. The lady's face was nosy and uninteresting, and with that suspicious mauve look which means restoration in its crudest form. There was a white woolly dog at her feet, the painting of which looked far less modern than the face or hands. The enterprising dealer, seeing the eye of my friend fixed upon the face, pointed to the dog and said he thought it fairer to say at once that

in the written history of the picture, which, until that year, had never left the Bugge and Broughton family—the dog was not mentioned in any detail; he therefore thought that Sir Joshua had merely sketched it in, and it had been finished possibly at a later date by one of his pupils; of this, of course, he could not be sure, but there was a certain shapelessness in the animal which suggested it. The rest of the picture was untouched and in magnificent condition; the trees as fine as Constable, the clouds as Turner, the drapery as Michelangelo. He observed my friend hesitate, so, throwing open his coat with the warmth of a man doing a generous action, he said:

“I will take it back at a profit any day you like; I can place it only too easily with the Earl of —.” At this my friend closed with him, and we all walked away congratulating one another.

Dealers of this type are unknown to-day, although, thanks to human vanity, there are quite as many victims.

If pictures could speak, it would be interesting

to hear what they could tell us on the author of their being. There would be a babel of talk in some of the Galleries—and considerable clatter at Christie's! which would make it not merely the rendezvous of education and interest that it is to-day, but an entertainment of such an exhilarating kind that it would be even more remunerative than it is to its present owners.

It is not necessary to know by whom a picture is painted to admire it. If you have a good eye you need not have a long purse to collect works of art and beautiful things of every description, including pictures. The important matter and preliminary to everything else is to acquire Taste; and this you will not do by sweeping condemnation, but by learning how to praise. However smartly your criticisms may be expressed, no one will care to listen to them if they think you have a mind closed to appreciation.

My friend, Mr. Desmond McCarthy, in the course of a conversation I had with him the other day, said: "Taste is appreciation of

Beauty in relation to life," and it is impossible to find a better definition.

Beauty demands a greater homage than the laudation or curiosity of a tourist ; and if unrelated to life, makes but a passing and superficial appeal. The contemplation of Beauty should arouse something more than emotion—a neglected memory, a finer thought, or a haunting inspiration. It is not only what you See but what you Feel that kindles appreciation and gives life to Beauty. Curiosity is not the same as sensibility, and if you are lacking in this you will never have perfect Taste. The power of feeling through the eye to the mind, the mind to the heart, and the heart to the soul, is not a matter of occasion, but of everyday life and within reach of the poorest people. Even those described in the Law Courts as "of no fixed abode" may have Taste. We have all observed gipsies who put on their cloaks with elegance, and I have seen vagrants lighting their pipes at sundown in attitudes of such grace that they could have posed as models to the greatest of Greek sculptors.

Beauty by itself is not enough to inspire any true artist. I asked William Nicholson—a painter for whom I have a profound admiration—if he would like to make a portrait of a lovely young woman of our acquaintance.

“Not at all,” he replied, “for at best I could only do a replica of her, and who could possibly want that?”

Contemplating her own beauty had done nothing for the lady in question, and it was hardly to be expected that some one from outside would do any better: at any rate, Nicholson did not feel equal to supplying his model with a countenance which life had not given her.

The Almighty is a wonderful handicapper, and few of the lovely women I have known have added anything to their own expression. The French talk of *la beauté inutile*, an excellent phrase for faces which, though perfect in themselves, make no personal appeal. What is called “a good likeness” is not a picture easy to hang in any beautiful house, and if resemblance is what is desired there are many admirable

and artistic photographers who can supply the need.

*Chassez le naturel et il revient au galop* is an aphorism that people are inclined to apply to art they do not understand.

*Le naturel* presents itself differently to different eyes, and the whole quarrel between the old and new school of painting is the conflict between Representation and Impressionism. No great painter ever copies : even Nature should not be copied, as when it comes to a competition between Nature and the copy, Nature would always win. It is the inspiration of the artist who interprets Nature as he feels it that is going to transform a common field or familiar face into something you have never seen before. When Nicholson said no one would want a replica of the model, he was exposing in one sentence the quarrel between Impressionism and Representation. People who have inherited fine pictures are not always artistic, and find it difficult to look at contemporary painting with a fresh eye. Under the generic name of "Old Masters" pictures are bought, hung, and

hallowed. Whether they are dull, dingy and signed, or light, shiny, and doubtful, matters little: they are immune from carpers, and their possessor feels secure. But every painting of fame in the last thirty years that has diverged from strict Representation has been called "Impressionism" and condemned as such by the orthodox. The interpretation of Impressionism depends upon the individual just as much as what is implied by *le naturel*; and no amount either of lucid or obscure writing upon the subject will force different individuals to see with the same eye.

I remember when Sargent was called an Impressionist; but who, having seen his collected pictures in the Royal Academy, would say that to-day? It is safe to predict that in not many years to come, when the world has learnt to recognize the galaxy of giants which succeeded the Barbizon school—Manet, Cézanne, Degas, and Daumier—critics will look upon Sargent as the best exponent of the nineteenth-century art (a century which, though fashionable to decry, produced Turner, Bonnington, Con-

stable, Darwin, Dickens and the Brontës) of the kind that is condemned to-day as "pretty-pretty."

It was the taste and talent for Representation that curtailed the development of Sargent's imagination, and the greatest pictures he ever painted are those which are nearest to Impressionism. What to my mind prevents him being an artist of great distinction is that the Self he was faithful to lacked the poetry, rhythm, tenderness and irony of men like Manet and Daumier.

Space forbids me to discuss differences of beauty, temperament, humour and exaggeration in any of the artists I have named. At their worst they all suffer from lack of sensibility ; and inherent in the exaggerations of both schools lies a kind of moral vulgarity. No one will be haunted by looking at Sargent's "Redemption"; and it is only when he leaves the ground that you realize his lack of rhythm and inspiration. What makes him a painter who will live is : his amazing execution, fidelity to what he saw, and freedom from affectation.

Goethe wrote: "It is only when the stars of the second magnitude begin to shine by the side of the greater luminaries that you realize the full splendour of Art": and every day I live I feel there is something shallow in those who can only see the sun and the moon.

When people say they only care for "good music" you may depend upon it they are not musical.

Fear amounting to terror of any form of prettiness which can be confounded with photography is what makes the taste of the day both in music, sculpture, and painting lean so heavily upon ugliness—or what is called "Character." But it should be possible to have character without being a character-part, and I sometimes wonder if the screaming colours, distorted drawing, and repulsive nudes that abound in modern exhibitions can be excused by saying they are full of character. Whose character—the artist's or the model's?

Fear lends itself to phantasy, and from phantasy you get to flourishes. Although the two

are often confounded, there is a marked difference between Fancy and Imagination. I think the lack of beauty displayed in the sculpture and painting of the Victorian era is not greater than the lack of humour exhibited in some of the pictures that Mr. Roger Fry and other modern critics extol to-day.

There was a prize offered in New York some years ago for the ugliest example of Victorian Art, and it was awarded to a porcelain figure of the Venus of Milo with a clock in her stomach. One could suggest many aspirants to that prize if it were offered for what is ugliest in the pictures of to-day, whether as seen in the International Winter Exhibitions at Burlington House or elsewhere; and I personally would far rather possess the Venus. After all, she is amusing and not aggressive; you need not stare at her; but no one can walk about rooms with downcast eyes to avoid looking at the walls. And if it is a question of value there is always the clock.

The excuse given for exaggeration and eccentricity in the artists is that they are sincere and

willing to admit their shortcomings—a form of candour which should endear them to us. But a man may be perfectly sincere who murders his mother, even while admitting that he will never do it again.

The function of Art is not to awe, teach, stun, or surprise. It is not meant to make you burst out laughing, or melt into tears. Its appeal is to something more fundamental and enduring than emotion, and I am distrustful of people whose Taste is beglamoured by journalism in music, discord in painting, and all the flourishes and exaggerations we are invited to admire to-day.

What is disheartening to thoughtful people is to see how little influence the great works of Art in the past have had upon the generations that succeed them. Horrible new buildings are erected every day on the outskirts of towns famous for their architecture; and you have only to look at the houses in Park Lane to realize how little influence even the beauty of a modern building like Dorchester House had upon the architects of the day. In these matters America

is a hundred years in front of us. When I was there I never saw an ugly modern building, and the streets of the new towns are planned like Boulevards in Paris.

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After contemplating the glories of Rome and Athens, the Egyptian tombs, the marvels of Chinese Art, the Primitives of every country, the sculpture, paintings, and architecture of the Renaissance, sensitive and artistic people may well be filled with despair. They look for Progress and see no advancement; they are discouraged and bewildered, and feel like strong men that are bowed down. They wonder if they are moving in a vast circle, and are afraid they may have missed the opening which would have put them on the path to progress. Retracing their steps does not help them: the friends they ask for direction are walking at different paces along the same road; strangers are standing by the way; stragglers are dropping out and they find themselves isolated.

There is only one consolation for these haunting reflections. Men that praise, Admire: and

those who admire have lives that cannot be measured by time.

When all they have loved have departed, people of Taste are never alone.



V

FASHION



V  
F A S H I O N

. . . Oft, in dreams, invention we bestow,  
To change a Flounce, or add a Furbelow.

POPE, *The Rape of the Lock*.

I EXPECT there have been many essays and dissertations upon Fashion, written by men famous for their wit and learning, which, could I but have known about them, would have assisted to make this paper interesting, as a little mild plagiarism is always permissible. But my education was neglected ; and, except upon etiquette, I have never read a line upon the clothes, customs, or adornment of the upper classes at any period in fashionable society.

With the exception of human beings, there is nothing more mysterious than Fashions, and the questions they raise are closely interwoven the one with the other. What humble designer has been made conspicuous by a famous

follower? Who is the power behind the throne that, after shouting the word of command, changes not only our clothes, but our faces, our figures, and our manners?—and what is the bed-rock from which Fashion springs?

Since the days of the Garden of Eden, men and women—or perhaps I should say women and men—have understood the significance of temptation, and practised the art of allurements. Temptation, though discouraged, is not forbidden in the Bible, and allurements have never been considered a sin.

I do not remember a single instance of a spookist telling us anything of interest about the next world. All I have read of their contributions to our knowledge has been disappointing, even trivial. Nor is the manner they acquire it dignified or convincing. We know nothing of the next world except what we apprehend. Among the many questions I would like to ask those who believe the departed return to us through raps, taps, and tables, is whether there will be a continuity of temptation; or allurements. If there is *not*, half the goodness

and most of the vitality will be taken out of the future we hope to inherit. Love is immortal, and as long as it is, we shall endeavour to attract and pursue it.

If I had the proper knowledge I should be able to give varied and unending examples of how the male attracts the female—and vice versa—in the world of birds and beasts. But I am a sportsman rather than a naturalist. Had I been a man, what I should most have cared about—after fox-hunting—would have been salmon-fishing. The beauty of moving water, the leisure for uninterrupted reflection, the mixture of patience and alacrity necessary to achieve success, would have been a rest, a pleasure, and an excitement. One might almost say of salmon-fishing what E. V. Lucas has said of cricket :

“Cricket is an intricate, vigilant, and leisurely warfare” : Or, to quote Izaak Walton :

“We may say of angling as Dr. Boteler said of strawberries : ‘Doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did’ : and so, if I might judge, God never

did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling."

There are many forms of angling not connected with fish. The conjurer who angles to catch your eye while he manœuvres his hands; the politician who angles for votes; the company-promoter who angles for confidence; the Press who angle for advertisement; the vulgar who angle for notoriety; the obscure who angle for fame; and the male who angles for the female.

In all this pursuing it is not the motive that I propose to examine, but the technique, or method, by which mankind achieves its object.

Before you can capture you must beguile; you must hold out something which will catch the eye and arrest the attention, and it is for you to decide whether the brilliant colours of a Durham Ranger,<sup>1</sup> or the subtler brown of a Black Dog,<sup>1</sup> is most likely to land your fish.

In sporting novels of an old-fashioned type—when the ladies wore flowing skirts and pork-pie hats—the followers of the chase were some-

<sup>1</sup> The Durham Ranger and Black Dog are salmon-flies.

times heard to shout, "Yoicks! Tally-ho!" when they observed hounds hit off the scent; but in a long experience of fox-hunting I never remember the most ardent sportsman commit himself to such an indiscretion. When you hit off a scent you are usually silent, as anything in the nature of noise or triumph on the part of the pursuer would awaken suspicion. If I were a salmon and saw a Durham Ranger hovering over my head I feel sure I should not need anyone to shout "Yoicks!!" as the brilliance of the bait would have put me on my guard, and I should whisk off to the shelter of the nearest bank. But the answer to this is, the brilliance of the lure does not awaken suspicion; and the majority of mankind succumb to surprise, swallow the bait, and the shouting is silenced.

It is certain that in all commerce if your wares are to sell they must be advertised, and whatever you want to entice must be attracted by something that startles the nerves, obscures the vision, and blinds the judgment.

I remember when I was a girl being offered

a reward if I would design an advertisement for soap manufactured at St. Rollox. Something more original was needed than, "Pure, Scented, Toilet." I conceived the idea that a figure of Lady Macbeth washing her hands with Tennant soap—which alone would erase the damned spots that were witnesses of her complicity—would advance the family fortunes; but the firm thought I was flippant, and rejected my cartoon.

Success in the art of advertisement is as difficult as prowess in the lure of love; and both are intimately connected with the idiosyncrasies of human nature.

This leads me to think that the changes and extravagances in Fashion are subconsciously devised not only to vary the monotony and add to the ornament of society, but to attract the male to the female.

It is commonly said that women dress for women; but in a community consisting entirely of women I do not think the majority would take much time over their toilettes. It was noticeable that neither the group of ladies who

believed in women's suffrage by constitutional methods, or the more advanced who believed that their objects would be gained by threatening the lives of myself, my husband, and my children, were well dressed. Their desire to discredit men and extol themselves made them indifferent to anything that was likely to attract the male. Their bait was a mixture of violence and hysteria, neither of them attractive, but both of them sensational, and—from a point of advertisement—eminently successful. The men who were interested in this movement were not as masculine as the women, and their names will not be even remembered among the Despardes, the Pankhursts, and the Smyths.

I am not dealing with the superior women of masculine minds—as these will never be leaders of Fashion—but I am dealing with ordinary men and women who from the days of Adam and Eve have understood the game of love, and practised the art of enticement. A man starts at a disadvantage over a woman in playing this game. If he is in earnest and in love, his sensibility is clouded by enthusiasm, and

his fear of failure is so great that he lays down his arms, and in this act of capitulation presents himself clumsily. If a woman is in earnest, she can adopt a thousand disguises to conceal it, and has a quiverful of arrows, none of which she will discard, and all of which she will employ to his discomfiture. Men are like children when they are in love : they are amateurs and easily deceived ; but, however amateur a woman may be in her painting, her sculpture, her music, or her philosophy, she is always a professional in the science of love.

The fact that a man perceived his advantage would prevent him from taking it ; but to put him at a disadvantage is more than half the battle with the gentler sex. Though all is considered fair in war and love, there are certain standards which men who are gentlemen will always observe.

My friend Gilbert Russell told me his mother once said to him :

“ If you don't marry a lady it will not matter very much ; but be sure the woman you marry is a gentleman.”

With the exception of very few women, I can truthfully say that I have seldom met a "gentleman" among my own sex. When I say a woman is "feminine," I mean she is spiteful and even merciless. When a man says it, he means she is yielding and soft. Women may be truthful in the sense that they will not lie, but they are hardly ever candid. Accuracy is unknown to them, and a clear statement of fact is almost impossible to get out of a woman.

Robert Lynd wrote of Jane Austen that she was : "A naturalist among tame animals." . . . An admirable description, but the animals must have been men, for women—like cats—are the only domestic animals impossible to tame.

However expansive they may appear to be, there is a strong vein of reticence in women. They will tell you all about other people, but little about themselves ; and, except in matters of gossip, the intimacy which appears so close between one woman and another is tepid compared to that which exists between a man and a woman.

Women are the Cat-burglars that Scotland

Yard is looking for, and if you had had female detectives they would have been caught long ago. Anonymous letters are seldom written by men ; and the campaign for women's suffrage would never have succeeded had not every Government in turn been exhausted by the courage, cruelty, and persistence of women. If duelling had been confined to women I very much doubt if it would not be in practice to-day ; and who is gullible enough to suppose that physically they are less tough than men ?

Could any man have gone through what Florence Nightingale endured ? I have known nurses sit up for five or six nights in succession when they have had what they call " a case " without turning a hair ; and the night my mother died—after a long and anxious illness—I found both day- and night-nurses playing cards at three in the morning.

The man who kills dragons is a mixture of muscle and mysticism. Women laugh at dragons and despise muscle, but they can smile away the confidence of any gladiator. They avoid straight contests, and I doubt if the most vigilant

umpire would prevent them from taking the buttons off the foils, or hitting below the belt. If what I have written seems severe, I will only ask what woman accused of crime, when given a choice by whom she would rather be tried—a male or female jury—would hesitate in her reply? We know without question that her answer would be in favour of the male. Nor can we forget that special seats were reserved for the vestal virgins in the gladiatorial contests of Ancient Rome.

This brings me to my original thesis. Women are on the defensive. In spite of all the tracts, the trousers, and the talk, women know that their natural protectors are men; and, having this knowledge, it is wiser for them—quite apart from physical reasons—to engage their attention and enlist them on their side.

Fashion more than anything else contributes to this instinct. I do not agree with Jane Austen, who says :

“Men only can be aware of the insensibility of man to a new gown. It would be mortifying to the feelings of many ladies could they be

made to understand how little the heart of man is affected by what is costly or new in their attire; how little it is biased by the texture of their muslin, and how unsusceptible of peculiar tenderness towards the spotted, the sprigged, the mull or the jaconet. Woman is fine for her own satisfaction alone. No man will admire her the more; no woman will like her the better for it. Neatness and fashion are enough for the former, and a something of shabbiness or impropriety will be most endearing for the latter."

Of a certain type of man this is true, but generally speaking, if men are not of the company, the woman who wishes to outshine a rival siren will not take so much trouble about her appearance. I think it is a duty women owe not only to themselves, but to every one else, to dress well; and life would be much duller and less informative if it were not for changes in fashion.

When it was considered vulgar to eat, and refined to swoon, the ladies of the day wore crinolines and the men wore whiskers. Crinolines were not only an armour against all assault,

but a barrier which prevented them from taking part in any pursuit more manly and dangerous than croquet. The lady having exposed her bust in the days of short waists, now concealed her person in a network of whalebone which made it extravagant, if not indecent, even to show an ankle. The very mention of the word "leg" was considered so indecorous that little children were encased in drawers whose frills extended from a voluminous skirt to the elastics upon their insteps.

The Fashion for hoops had passed before my day; but I remember once at Glen, when looking over the staircase to see the company going in to dinner, my Aunt Marion—a lady of whimsical nature and an eccentric—appeared in a vast crinoline of daffodil satin elaborated by festoons of black Spanish lace which on anyone else would have been extremely becoming.

At the time of my *début* the skirts, though still long, were clinging in the front, but fanciful at the back. In the place of the bustle we had thin whale-bones which were tied below the hips to sustain waterfalls of flounces, which

gave freedom to those who were proficient in the valse or the polka. The *décolletage* of the Court were sleeves off the shoulder, which are still pretty to people whose anatomy will bear inspection.

Either the men of that period were different from the men of to-day, or the present female attracts less attention; for, if any woman had dared to define her bustle or expose her calves at any time before the last few years, she would have been ostracized. It has been said by Mr. Arthur Ponsonby that with the disappearance of whiskers men have become less masculine; but be this as it may, it is difficult to see to what further lengths women in the future can go to attract their attention.

I remember a picture in *Punch* in the 80's of a pretty young woman trying to control her petticoats going over a stile in a wind, with a man looking on. The man said, "Bless your soul, miss, don't bother!—legs ain't no treat to me; I've been a bus conductor for ten years!" Whether legs are a treat to the masculine sense to-day or not I cannot say, but treats to be enjoyed should

not be overdone, and the time will soon arrive when as objects of attraction, skirts as short as kilts may be discarded.

In the insect world, I am told, the male is smaller than the female ; if this is accurate it is the only example of a similar insignificance. The peacock, the pheasant, the eagle, the robin, and other birds far outshine in colour and display their drabber consorts ; and you have only got to visit the Zoo to see how much more beautiful the male is than the female. Nor can I believe that animals would demean themselves by parting with any of their natural adornment. I cannot see them cropping their hair, or wearing false fur or false feathers. The fashion of the present day is what is called the " Eton crop," and festooning the chest with large imitation pearls. Women with neither backs nor tops to their heads, and faces as large as hams, appear at the King's Drawing-Rooms with the *nuque* of their necks blue from shaving ; and either the brains or the headgear have undergone a tremendous change in the feminine world, but I cannot buy a hat that will cover the

top of my head. When I protest against strings of pearls as yellow as old teeth decorating my friends' chests, the ladies say, "It is amusing!" which confirms me in the suspicion that my sex have an unreliable sense of humour.

It is difficult to account for the vagaries of Fashion, but with the disappearance of the corset there has been a change so marked and complete that it is impossible to exaggerate its significance. Veils, gloves, and stays being no longer in vogue, it is supposed that women—who are by nature sporting—have become more proficient in games and sport; but from what I hear from friends in the hunting-field, and judging by the loose horses with riders upon them that I see in Rotten Row, the stayless do not ride any better than they did in my day; and although riding astride has dated a habit-skirt almost as much as the name of "Alma" dated a woman in the 80's, Nature having given my sex round as against flat thighs makes it difficult for them to avoid having—what I constantly observe in modern riders—very impartial seats.

To turn for a moment to a personal matter, I will divulge the only contribution I ever made to Fashion.

Having been several times hung on my head by my habit-skirt in falls out hunting—which would have cost me my life had my early mounts been anything but faded hirelings—I conceived the idea of an apron-skirt, sewn into the right-hand seam of my riding-breeches, and fastened by an elastic going over the heel of my left boot. My habit-maker, a Scotchman of enterprise, was delighted with the idea, and after many fittings sent my new habit down to Melton.

I had not been long in Leicestershire and had only made friends with a few elderly, pleasant old sportsmen, but I had already given offence by discarding the tightly-buttoned-up habit-bodice for a long loose covert-coat over a double-breasted waistcoat, and I wore a wide silk double-tie instead of the fashionable stand-up collar. There were other little things that had worried my stable-companions. I was breathlessly alive, and possessed four accomplished hunters upon which I could take my own line ;

added to which I was constantly given a mount by the great and popular dealer Mr. Sam Hames, of Leicester. The lady who rode best at the time I went to Leicestershire was the Duchess of Hamilton, but she had broken her arm, and lived on the Market Harboro' side of the country. Her courage was so great that it did not prevent her from going out hunting, but I never saw her in her great days. Beyond the Irish dealer—Captain Steed—and Bay Middleton, I saw very little jealousy in Leicestershire; but there was a great deal of prejudice over matters of dress and equipment. The rumour had spread that I had invented a new habit-skirt, and innovations are never popular.

Arriving at the meet on my best hunter, and in my new riding-habit, I was greeted by a lady who in her younger days had captivated the hearts of all the famous beaux.

“Well, Miss Tennant,” she said, “is it true that in future we are all to wear habit-skirts made of an apron for fear of falling on our heads! Riding with the audacity that you do, no doubt makes this a necessity, but I do not think you

will succeed in getting any of us to follow you."

As the lady in question never jumped a fence I felt she had laid herself open to a personal rebuff, but I was not spiteful, and contented myself by asking her why she thought a safety skirt would be unpopular. To which she replied :

"If you imagine any of us are going to show our legs you make a great mistake—there are some things that no lady will do, and that is one of them."

I said : "Don't you like my riding-habit?"

The lady : "No one looks neater out hunting than you do, Miss Tennant, but since that is so, why wish to make yourself conspicuous? I am a great deal older than you are, and have hunted in the shires for longer than I care to confess, but we are not going to show our legs ; nor do I see the necessity if you are a good rider of being dragged upon your head."

As the hounds were moving off and my horse was in a frenzy of excitement, I said no more to her. When the first spurt was over we pottered about, trying to pick up the scent.

While waiting for information from a farmer as to whether a neighbouring earth had been stopped or not, I approached the lady, who was on the road waiting for her second horse. After looking round to see that we were alone I asked her if she liked my new habit :

“I have already told you, my dear, that I don’t object to the loose coat, though perhaps it is not very feminine—I can only tell you that your advanced ideas of starting an apron instead of a skirt will not meet with the approval of anyone in the hunting-field.”

I amazed her by telling her that the habit I was wearing was the offending garment ; and jumping off my horse, showed her how very little leg was exposed between the end of the long coat and the top of my riding-boots. I felt rather uneasy when I had done this, in case I should be unable to mount myself, but I was rewarded by her surprise and approval ; she consented to hold my rein, while I struggled on to my horse, which was 16 hands high and extremely capacious.

Before the season was over there was not

a lady in the hunting-field that did not wear the double-tie and the apron-skirt, and my habit-maker told me the new invention brought him a steady income of over £5,000 a year.

When I said Fashion changed not only our clothes, but our figures and our faces, you have only got to observe the beauties painted by Gainsborough to see how contracted and oval the shoulders, waists, and faces were at that time, in comparison with the contours of our beauties of to-day.

It may be that athletics and hygiene have thickened both the bones and the muscles, but it seems strange that at a time when women compete with men in games and sport, the skirts are worn as tight as they are to-day. They may be *chic*, but they are not practical.

We have no equivalent in English for the word *chic*, but we all know what it means. To define it roughly, I should say *chic* is the talent of foreseeing and forestalling Fashion and expressing it by your clothes in the most restrained manner. There is nothing more formidable than moderation in what is new and

likely to attract attention. The other French word which will give the best definition of the reverse of *chic* is to say a woman's clothes are *endimanché*. The English translation of this word is cumbrous, but expresses the same idea, "Sunday-go-to-meeting." Good dressmakers avoid elaboration: buttons that button nothing, bows that tie nothing, are meaningless and should be avoided. To be well dressed you should not appear to have made any effort.

M. Worth, the great dressmaker of my youth, told me that what first attracted him to Paris—where he spent the whole of his life—was seeing how badly the young Parisians in the society of that day were dressed; and he foresaw a great opening for anyone who had the taste to alter this.

It seems strange that we have to borrow the two words most descriptive of clothes—*chic* and *endimanché*—from a foreign language; but as the French will always lead the Fashion in clothes, it is only fair that they should be the interpreters of what they create. Nations, like people, have special talents and capacities,

and no one will ever compete with France in cooks, coiffeurs, and clothes.

To give a concrete example of fashion, beauty, and adornment I recall a ceremonial occasion when Queen Alexandra—then the Princess of Wales—held the annual Court Concert, a lovely entertainment no longer given at Buckingham Palace. We had all taken our places and were gazing at the royal dais, upon which sat the Prince and Princess of Wales, Princess Christian, the Duchess of Argyll, Princess Beatrice, Prince Eddy, Prince George—our present King—and other members of the Royal family.

After a profound curtsy, Albani the opera singer was holding her music in her hand, ready to begin singing, when there was a pause. The Duchess of Leinster, having arrived late, had had to wait till the Royal party had taken up their positions. To get to her seat she was obliged to pass in front of the dais—at all times embarrassing—and in those days, when you had to curtsy, not only to the Prince and Princess of Wales, but to the whole Royal family, an ordeal few could have faced. Queen Alexandra—

always the kindest of women—had, unknown to us, given the signal to wait, and mystified, we all sat and watched.

All eyes were turned upon the Duchess as she swept into the great ballroom. She wore a dress of white satin, cut in the fashion of the day, which was called “Princess.” This was made in a single piece, from the sleeves off the shoulder to the hem of the skirt, and clung as closely to the figure as a riding-habit. Three diamond bows, varying in size from a large one at the bust, to a smaller one below the waist, relieved her dress from an excess of simplicity. The skirt was trimmed at the foot with a full ruche of white ostrich feathers. None of us wore trains at Court Concerts, but her dress was long with a slight fullness where the lacing stopped at the back. Her decorations on one side clasped three feathers—the Prince of Wales’ feathers as they were called—and on the other you saw the beauty of her bare shoulders. She wore no jewels on her neck, but heavy bands of diamonds encircled her hair, which was caught up behind in a Greek knot.

After watching her bend her knees eleven times I came to the conclusion that curtsyng is not always a sign of subservience, but in the Duchess of Leinster was a gesture of challenge.

When that enthralling moment had passed the music and the company seemed to be a mere echo, and we looked down absently at our programmes.

After Queen Alexandra and the Grand Duchess Serge, Hermione Leinster was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. If her features were not as perfect, her presence was more distinguished than Mrs. Langtry's; and, though lacking the pathos of Lady Eden's<sup>1</sup> wonderful face, she had a more welcoming expression, and I had never met the beautiful Lady Dudley.<sup>2</sup>

Although there are many pretty faces in the society of the present day, deportment is not observed. Shoulders contract, and chins protrude, and there is a uniformity in hats and outline that makes it difficult to distinguish between one beauty and another.

<sup>1</sup> The Dowager Lady Eden.

<sup>2</sup> The Dowager Countess of Dudley.

I remember asking a sporting friend of mine if he admired Lady Claud Hamilton ; to which he replied :

“ By Jove, don't I!—to see her walk down the Row is like seeing a beautiful hound set upon its feet.”

The fashion of holding oneself well has not been kept up, which is strange, as the dancing of the day depends more upon the pose of the body than the activity of the feet. The greatest change I have seen and the quickest has been the transformation of the ballrooms. There have always been the same crowded rooms and clumsy movers, but whereas, in my middle-age, as well as in my early youth, the valsing needed extreme activity, the dancing of to-day exacts a certain immobility and is as well executed by the old as the young. An eminent Frenchman, on being shown the modern dancers, exclaimed : “ *Je n'ai jamais vu tant de figures tristes et de derrières gais !* ”

In a provincial town in America it was the fashion for young men to invite their young ladies to be their partners for a week at a time,

and to practise some of the new steps privately before they took the floor at the social gatherings. A good-looking and well-brought-up young couple, whose dancing had been much admired, arranged to meet in private and go through some of the new and more complicated movements. The young woman suggested that her beau should go to her house when her father was at his business and the gramophone would not disturb him. In the exhilaration of the practice they overlooked the time, and her father surprised them before the rehearsal was over. To the amazement of the young man he was ejected with violence downstairs and out at the front door.

On meeting the lady next day he remonstrated, saying how much his feelings had been hurt by her father's assault: to which she said:

"Oh! you mustn't be offended—my papa is deaf—he didn't hear the music!"



VI

HUMAN NATURE



## VI

# HUMAN NATURE

“We glory in tribulations also : knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope.”—ROMANS v, verses 3, 4.

I DO not know if the application of this text is universal ; but I imagine, like other generalizations, it depends upon the nature and character of different human beings for its ultimate truth.

Human nature is an ambitious subject to write upon, and a branch of learning that few take up. The study of it is confined in most of us to an imperfect understanding of the people we have met, and an unreliable knowledge of ourselves. It is incredible to me, when I observe the lives of eminent men that are devoted to the study of the Gulf Stream, the solar system, stamps, stones, birds, skeletons and zebras, that there are so few Professors in human Nature. And yet it is

by this study that we are most likely to learn what is required of us in life, and ultimately add inches to our own stature. All the knowledge of classics, mathematics, art, literature, music, and the drama will avail you little if it is not translated into knowledge that you can put to use : knowledge in relation to life that will help you to know yourself, and understand other people.

The reason why so many men of learning are dull is because they do not care for, or understand, other people ; and dare not face the truth about themselves. Their hearts have seldom been enlisted, and when they are, it is only for active service at home ; among their own belongings—their wives, their children, or their possessions. The legacy of self-security is crippling, and men who have inherited it have little influence in their lifetime, and are not remembered when they die. As they approach the end of their lives I doubt if they would say their experience had brought them Hope.

It would be interesting to know the thoughts of dying men. In this connection I remember reading a paragraph in the late Sir William Osler's

Ingersoll Lecture, entitled "Science and Immortality," in which he says :

"I have careful records of about 500 death-beds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The latter alone concerns us here. Ninety suffered bodily pain or distress of one sort or another, eleven showed mental apprehension, two positive terror, one expressed spiritual exaltation, one bitter remorse. The great majority gave no signs one way or the other ; like their birth, their death was a sleep and a forgetting. The Preacher was right ; in this matter man hath no pre-eminence over the beast—'As the one dieth, so dieth the other.'"

This quotation leads me to wonder what there is beyond knowledge that gives to human beings pre-eminence over the beasts.

**It is not law, or order.** Unless animals are frightened by man you seldom see a commotion among them ; and as far as order is concerned, no man could be tidier or more regular in his habits than animals. You may watch birds and cats cleaning themselves every morning of your life. And it is obvious to me that they bury their dead ; as in the longest walk you hardly ever come across the skeleton of an animal. They far surpass human beings in their sense of

locality ; for, although my own experience of horses finding their way home has been unfortunate—as whenever I have been embarrassed in the dark and have thrown the reins upon my horse's neck he has only stopped to nibble the grass—there are countless tales to refute this, and prove that when they have got rid of their riders, horses have found their way miles across country back to their own stables.

**It is not affection.** Both savage and domestic animals are known to be affectionate, and though their love may take strange turns, such as devouring their offspring rather than exposing them to the scrutiny of a stranger, the maternal devotion of some animals can well stand comparison with that of many of the mothers I have known.

**It is not work :** as in matters of industry no human being can be compared to an ant, and in the science of government it is hard to find a more absolute authority than the ascendancy of the queen-bee.

But my purpose is not to make comparisons between men and animals, but between men

and men : to try and analyse what differentiates the one from the other, and examine the truth of what St. Paul says. Is he justified in telling us that after we have gained Patience through tribulation our experience will lead to Hope? Many people would deny this. They would assure us that all our love, all our sacrifices, our counsel, and our warnings will not affect the young ; and quote an old saying—well known to most of us—that no man ever profits by another's experience.

If this were true we would despair of human nature. But there are a good many sayings current among us that have been proved to be not only misleading, but inaccurate.

In the examination of human beings I have often thought if we could strip them of their charm, looks, intellect and conversation ; and leave their hearts, souls, and natures bare, it would be interesting to know how many would be found standing up. You may say, as all these are inextricably interwoven, this would not be possible. Nevertheless, what differentiates one human being from another, goes

deeper than a difference of mind, manners, and appearance and is obvious to anyone of insight. The division between a fine nature and a fine intelligence is as marked as the difference between a nigger and an albino. I have known in my own experience men and women of good looks, fine manners, and remarkable minds—even occupying positions of eminence—who have lived without influence, and died without love. They have been little better than social, scientific, academic, ecclesiastical, or political ornaments; which, having started at a high price, became like the books with string tied round them which you see at railway stalls, marked “Cheap and soiled.”

There must be some reason why individuals who appear to have had such a large share of success in life should survive themselves, and depend only upon the next world for immortality. Immortality in this world depends upon how much you have impressed your fellow-men: and this can only be done by something within yourself that is more than material.

The majority of mankind is material and un-

imaginative. Tribulation sits uneasily upon them, and they feel little concern in other people's sorrows. Except for a few anæmic personal affairs of a filleted heart, they have never put themselves to the test. Not having felt the full power of Love, they have never been able to receive it, and have in consequence been denied the greatest of human experiences.

There is nothing more profound in life than to speculate over the reasons why some people are loved, and others are not. Quite apart from the question of sex, some of the greatest rascals have been loved. You will see a man not conspicuously striking or witty; not especially truthful or honourable; neither well-born, well-favoured, nor rich; but he is loved by both sexes. If he were only loved by women the problem would not be worth consideration. Pascal said: "*Les femmes ont ni gout ni dégoût,*" and no sensible person would be influenced by the opinion of a woman about a man. (The first question a woman puts to herself—whether consciously or subconsciously—about a man when he leaves the room is whether he likes her or not.

The first question a man asks is whether he likes or dislikes the man. It may be a score in your favour if a man likes you, but it can hardly be a score in his.)

The kind of rascal I have described is called "a bounder" by elegant women; stiff men will say he is unreliable, and in every discussion his name will be met by a cataract of adverse criticism. But those who have probed with more profundity will say:

"A great deal of what you say is true! But he has got affection, vitality, understanding, and an independent judgment. There is nothing second-hand about him; he is always himself. Servants and children adore him, and if I were in a tight place I know he would help me—I confess I love him!"

No one has said anything in defence of his looks, morals, brains, or manners; but, taking him for all in all, he has been recognized as a man of Nature, and as such will always command love.

It is permissible to ask what we mean by "a man of Nature." Though hard to define, I think it means the spontaneity not of the tongue

or the brain, but the unpremeditated output of a rich heart, and a general understanding of the frailties common to us all.

Men and women of Heart are sufficiently rare to be conspicuous; you can recognize those who have it in a complete stranger. I remember seeing a young man in the street run forward to escort a blind woman from an omnibus to the pavement. When they parted he lifted his hat to her.

If you listen to the conversation round a table upon a disaster like the wreck of the *Titanic* you will know—even if you have never met any of the company before—which of them is capable of deep feeling. Curiosity as to which of the crew had been remiss, or which of the passengers had been cowards; confident assertions of what should have been done; shallow censure on what had not been done; and the comfortable conclusion that the captain had been drowned, formed the bulk of the comments I listened to over that terrible event.

It is not a question of sentiment or of agitation: these are often physical. It is a question of Heart.

Perhaps it is asking too much of anyone to prove a capacity for deep feeling by comments made on any particular occasion, but it is an indication that assists one in estimating the difference of one man from another. Many of the most charming, cultivated, and intelligent people we know are lacking in Heart. The prestige of their personality, wit of their commendations, charm of their conversation, and refinement of their manners will make them quoted, praised, imitated, and decorated ; but it will not make them loved.

St. John says : “ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

What a strange power is the power of love, that can mean the difference between life and death ; and what an interesting proof St. John gives of what he conceives to be Immortality. He does not say we have passed from death unto life because we are loved ; or because we love anyone in particular—either God or man—but “ *because we love the brethren.*” This means disinterested emotion, and personal service ;

only to be found in people of rich and fine natures. Love of such a kind is not a question of morals or of sentiment; it may even be divorced from passion. It is an inner attitude of self-detachment connected with an apprehension of other people's feelings; an over-mastering sense of Pity; and a longing to put yourself at the service of all and sundry who are in any way troubled, lonely, or ashamed. People who are self-scanned, self-centred, and self-secure; or who have not suffered, will find it difficult to acquire this inner attitude, this acquaintance with life. The word Tribulation covers many and varied forms of suffering, and usually has a more enduring effect than focusing pity upon yourself. Tribulation awakens compassion, begets understanding, and engenders tenderness—always a rare quality and oftener found in men than women. I myself am not very tolerant of Patience; but without it, it is certain that your comprehension of others will be limited and your influence curtailed. Patience precludes severity, and severity influences no one. Persuasion is a more powerful weapon than punishment.

Though punishment may be a necessity, it must always be a disadvantage to those who inflict it.

The Lord Mayor of Cork, in a speech delivered in 1920, said :

“ It is not to those who inflict the most suffering, but to those who suffer most that victory will come.”

And Dean Inge wrote in one of his four devotional addresses :

“ The good news of Christianity is that suffering is itself Divine. It is not foreign to the experience of God Himself.”

In old days Fear played a large part in determining men's actions. The freedom of a new world has outgrown the blackmail of Fear: and though force is still believed in by the majority of the Labour and Tory parties in this country, is cultivated abroad, and practised—to a degrading degree in Italy—the considered judgment of those whose opinions count in the civilized world is against it.

Authority to-day is not merely given to men of action, but of feeling; they have an unsuspected power over their fellow-creatures, and exert a marked influence over events.

This aspect of things leads me into the profounder examination of the soul and conscience ; but in a paper of this length I cannot probe into the spiritual side of men. What we are concerned to know about is not where man comes from, or whither he goes, but what he *is*, and by what method any of us can add to our own or to anyone else's stature.

I can never remember the time when I was not given good advice. Every day I was told not to frown, not to stoop, and not to waddle : to eat slowly, speak clearly, and ask no questions. But even if you comply with all these demands, it does not take you very far ; and when your parents are gone, your husband has got accustomed to you, and there is no one left to tell you anything, it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid remaining stationary.

The advice that would have most helped us is never given.

*" We receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone doth Nature live ;  
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud."*

This is a profound, if discouraging, saying. You run your mind over the people you have known and whose death has either left many a dry eye, or a wound which can never be healed ; and come to the unchallengeable conclusion that those who have been most loved have given Love.

I am not certain, however, that the world is as business-like as all this ; and am inclined to think we receive a little more than we give ; or we would not have the Hope to carry on, or the courage to face the complexities of everyday life.

Some people ask for nothing ; they are acquiescent, and accept things as they are. Religious people do not expect to receive anything in this world. They are impelled forward by a service that is perfect freedom, and their worship for what is beyond themselves is sufficient reward. Philosophers do not aim at a return for their labours. They want solitude to enable them to disentangle the problems of life, and suggest through their work methods by which they can help to enlighten their fellow-

creatures. Artists give what they can ; and poets are always alone. But unless people have little Hope and thin natures, they like Giving and Receiving.

Here I come to my text. We are told by the Apostle Paul that having gone through tribulation which worketh Patience our experience will give us Hope.

Many people would deny this : They say :

“ We have seen a devastating war in which the victors have gained little ; and are watching civilized people competing with one another in follies of every kind. Wasteful expenditure in armaments and memorials ; bribes, boasts and challenges. We see nations overburdened with gold, and others with corn, while some are on the brink of bankruptcy, and others of starvation. We see extravagance rampant, and education cut down. We see work crying out to be done, and the unemployed grabbing at a dole. We see churches empty, coalfields idle, and youths of immature age in gaol ” : and they end by asking where the Hope is that can justify St. Paul. But St. Paul knew his world ; and no one believes

that mankind lives backwards. You cannot rely with the same certainty upon Time in this world, to heal as you can upon Hope; and given reasonable health, Despair is a passing and not a permanent condition of the mind.

It is only in the schoolroom that we are told it is wrong to be ambitious. To be full of aspiration without any purpose is not a condition which the stupidest nurserymaid would recommend, and if we eschew Ambition we may abandon Hope.

If we were permitted to ask the godmother—supposed in fairy-tales to preside at the birth of a princess—what gift we most wished her to bestow upon us, who would doubt we should say “high spirits”? Good spirits will conquer even bad health; and the youngest of us are taught that money—being the root of all evil—is not a thing to be desired. Translated into simple language, good spirits mean high hope, without which life would be a drab affair and death meaningless.

It seems hard that as a preliminary we have to pass through Tribulation to gain Experience;

but when you stand to receive such a great reward as Hope which of us should repine?

The people we have met—and they are rare—who have not been tested by Tribulation are not worth knowing.

In our youth it was enjoined upon us that everything that was most disagreeable and painful was sent for our good; but I do not think this is true. Suffering does not necessarily improve people; all one can say in its favour is that it fortifies endurance. If you notice closely it is not from tribulation and hardly ever from pain that people take their own lives. There are few recorded cases of deaths from broken hearts.

Men and women generally commit suicide for inadequate reasons: a momentary dejection, unrequited love, or more often fear of losing their money.

What our thoughtful Press describe as “a determined suicide” has often puzzled me. What is an undetermined suicide? In this connection I remember reading somewhere of an ardent young policeman, full of desire to do his duty and reform the world. On being

pressed to explain his ideas, he said he was determined to put down suicide. This is not more ridiculous than people who say that the fashionable nostrum of birth-control should be made compulsory. There is no occasion upon which even clever people will not say foolish things. It is only in the face of great tribulation that tongues are silenced.

Anxiety is a denial of faith and does not always come from affliction. It is a matter of temperament and has little to do with experience. The people who expatiate most freely upon it and in the loudest tones—whether about their bodies, their money, or anything else—are generally in robust health and comfortable circumstances. You seldom hear the same complainings among the poor. They are strangers to anything but anxiety; it is their daily experience, their chief companion, and a familiar face. People in straitened circumstances and of uncertain health are shining examples of the hold Hope has not only upon the imagination but the lives and hearts of humanity. Bacon says: “Hope is but the dream of a man that is awake.”

The rich indulge in anxiety with far less excuse than the poor indulge in drink : and with less consciousness of the contempt they are exposing themselves to. It is almost a platitude to say that people of wealth are too often concerned about themselves, and fearful of being imposed upon, ever to be happy or heart-whole.

It is only the fine natures that profit by Experience. But it is comforting to think that St. Paul—who had gone through many vacillations and vicissitudes, after a troubled and varied career—should not be giving us advice, but stating with certainty the conclusion he had arrived at :

“That tribulation worketh Patience ; and patience Experience ; and experience Hope.”



VII

F A M E



## VII

### F A M E

“I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.”—ECCLESIASTES x, verse 7.

**I**N the good books given to us to read in our youth pleasure was suspected, success abjured; riches reproved; adornment discouraged; and falls predicted for those who fancied themselves, or were in any way gratified by their own position in life.

It was not only pride that caused the fall, but anyone who courted Fame, power, or success seemed certain of a harsh reward. The pattern of the lives of the religious persons that I knew when I was young was as colourless and uniform as the mosaics on the floor of a public building; and this pattern was imprinted on their minds by a creed of singular austerity. Men of fixed creeds have less elasticity than those of strong faith, and in reading their Bibles are apt to dwell

upon those texts and commendations that fit most tightly into their own way of thinking. Finding—as they do—that the humble and meek are extolled at the expense of the rich and famous, reinforces their convictions.

The prejudice against Fame, success, and pleasure was largely due to the violent conception of the Almighty, which had lasted for so many generations that it was difficult if not impossible to eradicate. God was an image with an axe who felled to the earth anyone who did not conform to the recognized view of Him, and rewarded all those who feared and wooed Him. The sensuous and self-indulgent thought that through music, mutterings, fasts, and self-abasement, God was a Being who could be cajoled. The cold and self-denying believed that His face was resolutely set against anything in the nature of beauty, ostentation, or display.

Superstition—from ignorance, and an arrogant belief in themselves—made men coerce and compel God in the days of the Inquisition, till human nature could endure it no longer, and

the leaders of religion were obliged to soften towards less drastic and authoritative methods. With the disappearance of a cruel man you got a kinder God: but there still remained considerable uneasiness—with those who had been taught that Awe was more important than Love—as to the best manner of serving Him. All that the good were certain of was that an exalted position, and any kind of Fame, were to be eschewed; and that their business was to see that the coming generation did not take advantage of the newer latitude, or become in any way too trusting, affectionate, or familiar with the Almighty.

Although it was not certain that success was a sin, it was considered highly undesirable to encourage it, and Fame, ambition, and love of life were condemned in favour of fear, abasement, and terror of death. As a counteraction to the unforeseen exhilaration felt by the crowd in witnessing public executions, death was associated with nothing but Hell-fire, and it was considered not only bracing, but a duty, to frighten the young. Criminals hanging from

the gallows took the place of Christ hanging upon the Cross, and as late as the history of the Fairchilds, we are told that the head of the family made a long expedition to see a corpse swinging in the wind in order to point a moral to his young children. Had it only been a warning against notoriety and a morbid interest in crime, we might—while regretting his action—have understood it; but it was the pursuit of everything that could bring prominence, gaiety, or success that was deprecated. The youthful aspirants of that period were persistently told that any courting of Fame could only end in personal humiliation.

It seems unfair that Fame should be associated with such punishing and undeserved results; and one can only wonder to whom we should assign blame.

From childhood upwards we are warned against becoming Jacks-of-all-trades and urged to make the most of our particular talents. How then if we are in any way proficient or remarkable can we escape Fame? A man would have to be either immensely rich or curiously inhuman

if he did not take advantage of proficiency whether in the region of medicine, mathematics, art, science, or literature.

But if Fashion, with which I dealt in another paper—is fickle, what is there to be said about Fame? Fashion, at any rate, has the good taste to remain stable for a few successive seasons, but Fame cannot even be depended upon to last as long as that. There are various interpretations and different aspects of the word Fame. By some people it is used to denote notoriety, by others it means something greater and more enduring. Just as there is a difference—indeed all the difference—between literature and journalism, there is a difference between Fame and notoriety. The first deals with prophets and posterity: the second with the present and the populace.

The Future—although a sleeping partner in the firm of Fame—is all-important, and which of us can attempt to foretell it? To steal a stage expression, there are few straight parts for prophets to play nowadays, and such as there are, are acted by amateurs who are pretentious and unreliable.

Sir Oliver Lodge believes that insight is given to some people to foresee things before they occur; and that such "anticipation" or "premonition" may be achieved "by strange methods." He says: "A kind of self-hypnotism may be induced by staring at a bright surface or a reflecting crystal," etc. I do not know in what department of this large factory of swindle I could buy the correct kind of "bright surface" or "reflecting crystal," but I am going to confine myself in this short paper to what I have observed in my own experience of the ups and downs of men of Fame, and not attempt to foretell what the world may have to say about them in the future.

When you see the quick-turn changes of opinion upon one and the same man in the course of a few months, you wonder whether this is due to the Press, the Public, or the Person.

There is a difference between being Big and being Great, and they must not be confused. To come to concrete instances, the late Lord Northcliffe was a Big man. He wielded—not always for good—great influence at a time

when England was strained to the uttermost by the anguish of the War. He tried according to his lights, and through the medium of his newspapers, to warn the public of the dangers they were exposed to: of the spies concealed in every shrub; of the certainty that the enemy would land upon our shores; and by a cruel insistence that every owner of a German name should be incarcerated, he destroyed the trade and annihilated the families of many loyal and devoted citizens. He went further. By attacking Lord Kitchener, my husband, and Sir Edward Grey he tried to undermine the confidence of the country in its leaders.

It is perhaps too much to expect of any journalist that he should so far forget himself as to make a moral appeal in time of trouble. What he wants to do is to sell his papers and advertise his own importance. There is nothing dramatic in Patience, or sensational in Fortitude, and readers of newspapers are seldom excited by praise. Lord Northcliffe's journalistic instinct counted on the misery of the bereaved, and the apprehension of the public: and in his desire

for speedier and more spectacular successes, his formidable egotism encouraged the impression that could he but be placed in a position of authority—and allowed to supersede the Government of the day in the conduct of the War—not only the Germans, but any other enemy, would be easily disposed of.

After assisting in the resignation of the reigning Prime Minister he tried for several years to effect the downfall of his successor, but the more he abused Mr. Lloyd George the more he strengthened his position: and if you never knew it before, you learnt it then, that except in time of war the Press has little or no influence.

Lord Northcliffe was sincere, but he was a megalomaniac; and if you are always contemplating yourself, your vision is of necessity curtailed. Personal antagonisms, ignorance, and a misplaced confidence in himself prevented Lord Northcliffe from being a Great man.

Newspapers, like individuals, have their favourites. They can advertise the appearance, movements, habits, and sayings of their hero, and by strenuous propaganda and persistent

photography make him known to the public ; but prominence is ephemeral, and it takes more than advertisement to make a man Great.

The Big fill the eye, delight the public, and excite the Press. The more they are advertised the larger they appear to be ; but advertisement of this kind does not promote healthy growth, and when a rash relish for the limelight has lured the Big into prominence, or bribed them into putting themselves upon paper, their dimensions are apt to shrivel.

John Morley once said a shrewd thing to me on hearing of a young politician who devoted his leisure to reading the Lives of Napoleon :

“ Pray tell him from me to study the drab heroes of life.”

Some people value publicity more than others. I have known men who have played decisive parts in the history of their country who have not valued it at all. Nor is it always from vanity or design that some of the men and women we know attract attention. A baffling individuality, personal magnetism, something courageous, vital,

and independent mark out certain people; and even if they begin by being little known they end by commanding public attention.

In spite of Lord Kitchener's magnificent figure, and desert eye, I doubt if he was known by sight to the man in the street before the Great War. Every one was aware that he had played a decisive part in Egypt and South Africa, and shown exceptional talent for diplomacy in the Fashoda incident, but these had been more or less forgotten. My husband—who was Prime Minister—realized directly the War broke out in 1914 that Lord Kitchener was a figure that would command attention. He asked him to take the War Office long before there was any Press clamour for this appointment. In spite of his popularity many of the blunders he made in his own department in the early days of the War laid Lord Kitchener open to severe criticism. One can only conclude that there was that indefinable something about him which made him from being a stranger to the public become the transcendent figure he was. Lord Kitchener was the ideal Big man, and it is

for the future to decide whether or not he was Great.

Every bus-man touched his hat to Mr. Gladstone, but Lord Salisbury—whose name was known all over Europe—could have passed through most public assemblies without recognition. He had not the gift attributed to Royal personages, and seldom recognized anyone who was not well known to him. I remember an old lady telling me that, after her son had been one of Lord Salisbury's minor secretaries for some time, on meeting him she inquired if he was pleased with such modest work as her boy had been able to do for him. He asked her—with the greatest courtesy—what the name of her son was ; and when she told him, he remarked in a thoughtful manner :

“ I thought the young man's name was Hicks.”

Some men flash across the sky like meteors, leaving but little trail behind them. If such a one is remembered, it is because the brief brilliance of his career appeals to the imagination of posterity, and a good biographer can keep their name alive ; but even Biographies are

no insurance against the fickleness of Fame. In the conspicuous case of Lord Randolph Churchill, a biographer of genius sprang up to make his father's name famous.

In this connection I would like to say I think Mr. Winston Churchill's name will never be forgotten. Industrious, eloquent, and sincere, if alternating in political conviction, no one can accuse him of being changeable in private friendship. The trouble about him is that up till now the exact political niche which he could best fill has not been discovered.

For a man who has treated both the public and the Press with a singular absence of mind, my husband is quickly recognized; but with the exception of the Prime Minister, Lord Birkenhead, Lord Balfour, and Mr. Churchill, I do not think any of the present Cabinet are known by sight. To Lord Curzon no one raised a hat or a cheer. In spite of his brains, good looks, lovability, and the voluminous pages of print written about him since his death, I do not think George Wyndham was recognized in a crowd.

It may be presumptuous, but having had a long experience of different people—both drab and distinguished—I propose to engender “a kind of self-hypnotism,” not by “staring at the bright surface of a reflecting crystal,” but by enumerating the names and qualities of some of the men I myself think should have a claim upon posterity.

The first great man I knew was Mr. Gladstone, and though it is the fashion for the moment to belittle him in favour of the more dazzling, diverting and impudent Disraeli, nothing that anyone can say or write can steal from the Future “the legacy of all his courage.”<sup>1</sup> His last Cabinet was composed of men who will be remembered for very different reasons.

No one can read the letters of Sir William Harcourt without feeling certain that his name will be remembered. He was the last of a type unknown to us to-day. Coarse, brittle, witty, generous and warm-hearted, in spite of all the appearance of a Great man, he was impeni-

<sup>1</sup> A quotation from Sir Edmund Gosse’s criticism of Frederick Harrison.

tent, inconstant, and fitful. He never seemed to add an inch on to himself, and remained to the end as exasperating as a child in its tantrums, with his embarrassing quarrels, precipitate decisions, lack of reason, balance, and conviction.

I was very young when I first met him. My father, mother, sister Laura, and I were invited to his house in Grafton Street to meet Mr. Gladstone (who was then Prime Minister) at a Liberal crush. I did not know my host or hostess or a single person in the room. I remember Laura—after scanning some of the company—pointing out Spencer Lyttelton and saying to me: “I believe that is a very clever man; he is the Prime Minister’s secretary.”

To which I replied:

“Is he really? Why he looks exactly like a policeman!”

While waiting for our parents at the bottom of the stairs we were approached by our host, who said:

“And who may you two nice little girls be?”

When we had informed him, he conducted

us into the dining-room and gave us strawberry ices.

(There were as many divisions in the Liberal party then as there are to-day, but my husband and I retained our affection for Sir William Harcourt, and his friendship, until he died.)

John Morley will be best remembered for his enchanting conversation. Jowett for his brevity, the penetration of his criticisms, and the inspiring influence he had over the undergraduates at Balliol. Arthur Balfour for his imperishable charm and dexterity in debate. Lord Midleton for his fine temper and unswerving loyalty: Lord Hugh Cecil for a kind of white passion, and his unrivalled political eloquence. Lord Cowdray for his public spirit and private generosity. Thomas Burt for his high mind and good manners: Gilbert Murray for his fast friendships and poetical scholarship. Edward Grey for his mental calmness, moderation, and character. And the present Prime Minister for his modesty and good sense. I could go through many more names of men that I have personally known who will have a claim upon

Fame ; but in what proportion posterity will mete it out to them is difficult if not impossible to say.

There are even better tests by which we can measure stature than there are signposts by which we can foretell Fame. The ways in which popular figures bear adversity, endure obscurity, and challenge calumny are a test of Greatness.

I knew a man who occupied a position of authority over a long period of years in this country. He was held in high estimation by his friends, and profound respect by his opponents. At a time when the youth of the country was asked to face death, and the world was plunged into war, his speeches rallied Englishmen, Colonials, and men from every quarter of the globe to the cause for which we were fighting. For a short time the newspapers trumpeted his praises ; and his sayings were blazoned across the lions in Trafalgar Square. But he was not spectacular, and cared little for himself. Impatience with the unforeseen duration of the War bred fear, and fear provoked rumour. With the assistance of the donkeys, the climbers,

the credulous, and the Press, a campaign of calumny was started against him unequalled in the history of this country. Nothing was too vile or too silly to be believed against him. But no one ever heard him allude to the treachery of his friends, or complain of the conduct of his enemies.

No one contributed more to making the stupidity of his fellow-countrymen impressive than Lord Lansdowne. He laid himself open to virulent public abuse and private ignominy by publishing a letter during the latter part of the War, expressing in simple and incontrovertible language what every man of feeling and common sense was thinking, and the wisdom and nobility of which will make his name remembered when others are forgotten.

Space forbids me in a paper of this length to enumerate more names of the playmates of Fame; but we have all known men of whom it can be said they were:

“Servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.”



VIII

POLITICS



## VIII

# POLITICS

“The vile person shall be no more called liberal . . . the liberal deviseth liberal things ; and by liberal things shall he stand.”—ISAIAH xxxii, verses 5 and 8.

SOME weeks ago I received a signed letter from West Virginia. The writer informed me that he and his college friends were engaged in “studying the last chapter of English literature,” and he did not believe their researches would be exhaustive till he had received accurate and personal information from me about my books, my character, and how I ever came to be an author. He concluded with these words :

“I realize we are asking for a good deal, but hope, for the sake of Knowledge, you will answer.”

“The last chapter of English literature ” and how I ever came to be an author are problems of such unequal importance that I was inclined

to think my correspondent could only be poking fun at me, and was tempted to write a quizzical retort ; but observing that the letter was addressed from the Morgantown High School left me in little doubt. In spite of realizing with almost painful clearness that this would be my last, as indeed it had been my first, opportunity of adding one iota to the sum of human knowledge, I refrained from sending a reply.

I confess I have often wondered, not only what profession I would have chosen but what I could have done in life, had I been a man instead of a woman. I could never have been a soldier or a sailor ; I have not the kind of mind to have succeeded as a lawyer ; and neither the conventionality of a diplomatist, nor the neutrality of a civil servant, would have been congenial to me. I could have done many things rather badly, and a few rather well. I could have taught dancing or riding : we are all musical, and had I had longer fingers I might have played, or possibly taught, the piano. We could all draw, but my sister Lucy Graham Smith was so much more gifted than the rest

of us that I neglected my talent, or I might have painted portraits, interiors, or possibly apples upon chairs. What I would have liked would have been to furnish and decorate my friends' houses, as I seldom see one that I admire. But as most people fancy their own taste more than anyone else's, I do not think I would gain a livelihood in this way. At the suggestion of my friend—Lady Ribblesdale—I went to visit the manager of a large furniture shop in the West End of London, and suggested to him that I should interview his clients from ten to one daily, at a high salary. He waved a fat hand in a circular manner, and pointing out the perfections of the hideous room in which he was sitting, asked me if I really had the presumption to imagine I could improve on the taste of the exclusive "Art experts" he kept in his employ. With a pained but interested expression he advised me to leave his presence and try something else.

In reflecting upon various professions, my attention was attracted by reading in the newspapers of a man who was "vermin trapper and

eel-catcher to the Duke of Norfolk," which rather took my fancy; but education in the 80's was inadequate, and I do not believe the Arundel estate-agent would have engaged me.

I was born with a tempestuous nature difficult to tame, and hard to harness. I was moody and passionate, with devouring vitality, an impressionable mind, and an irritable temper. I struggled to crack a hard nut within myself and was tortured by the feeling of distance between man and God. To modify this Self and find equilibrium was of primary importance, and I was fortunate in having as a close companion my sister Laura, and the moorland country round Glen in which I could find a refuge when exasperated by the inexpressiveness of my elders and tutors.

I never cared for writing, or I might have achieved some success in literature, but such writing as I indulged in was merely a means of getting rid of myself.

My diary was kept as a safety-valve. I could write freely all that I was thinking without fear of offence. The kind, quiet pages would not

draw themselves up, or shoot back spirited and cruel replies. And, above all, neither my criticisms, or my outpourings, would ever be ridiculed and repeated.

I would never have ventured into print had it not been for the advice of one or two of my friends. The Master of Balliol (Benjamin Jowett) told me as far back as 1889 that if I were not so frivolous I might become a writer of distinction ; John Addington Symonds implored me to give up drifting ; and ultimately Lord Morley and Lord Balfour persuaded me to write, and to publish my autobiography. Thanks to Lord Balfour I had always taken trouble in writing my diary. He advised me to leave a wide margin on which I could date all the prophecies I made upon political events, and my first impressions of strangers, their characters, natures, and intellects, as it was easy to fake a diary. I had never considered this as a possibility, but have often been grateful for this sound advice. To be truthful when you are untempted is simple ; to be accurate is another affair. My sex are born embroiderers, and I hardly know a woman who

can give a clear statement of fact. In society this may lend colour, but in intimacy it is mischievous, and for any kind of reminiscence it is fatal. As a matter of fact, my diaries only supplied me with a few dates and records of conversations.

Some of the critics of that much-abused work said I would write so much better if I could realize how little interest the world took in my subject. But would they have preferred me to write upon what I do not know?—Geometry, History, Gas, or the Gulf Stream?

I do not think Messrs. Thornton Butterworth, who had already taken heavy risks in publishing a first work of an unknown writer, would have cared for this.

Had I had a name like “Mrs. Poultry Teck Tonins,”<sup>1</sup> I believe anything I wrote would command attention; but being who I am, I had to be heavily advertised, and as publishers and journalists sell their wares by exciting curiosity—just as Beecham sells pills or Pears sell soap—it became the fashion to say I was “brilliant”

<sup>1</sup> Name I saw in an American advertisement.

and “indiscreet” ; after which—though these epithets make me yawn—my writing could hardly escape a certain amount of attention. It is pure fiction, as I am always precise, seldom brilliant, and never indiscreet.

What I really care for are politics. They have absorbed me ever since I can remember, and achievement in the House of Commons would have been the height of my ambition. I can think of nothing that I would have cared more about than being able to argue and give effect to political ideals in speeches, either upon a platform, in the open air, or on the floor of the House of Commons. Even if I had not been a famous orator, I do not think I would have talked nonsense : or made the mistake—common to good and bad speakers alike—of speaking at inordinate length.

When unoccupied men tell me they are not interested in politics, I know where I am. The probability is they care for sport and games, yachting, climbing, or travel : or possibly they are passengers in the long train of passers-by and care for nothing very much.

Politics—in the widest application of the word—cover almost everything of interest; and only the very learned or the very stupid can be indifferent to current affairs and movements which are shaping the lives of the whole civilized world.

I propose to write with brevity upon events that have affected, not only my private life, but the fortunes of the Liberal Party.

My lot was not cast upon a houseboat, a yacht, or a pirate-ship, but upon a man-of-war, and I never remember any time during the eleven years we were in Whitehall that our ship was not commissioned for active service. Home Rule, Prison Reform, Temperance, Women's Suffrage, trade disputes, the Veto of the House of Lords, and the decision to go into the War (in 1914) were among the problems that pursued my husband throughout his administration. With an experience of men and affairs dating from further back than 1908—when we went to 10 Downing Street—I propose to examine what it is that seems to me to differentiate the Liberals from both the Conservative and the Labour Parties.

The fundamental difference does not lie in platforms, policies, or programmes: it lies in hostility to Force, and an imperishable belief in Freedom. Those who consider this to be a phrase make a profound mistake: it is a Fact. There is nothing liberal in violence: it shows not only weakness, but a complete lack of understanding. If an All-Powerful God "by UNDERSTANDING established the Heavens," how much more must a less-powerful man realize he cannot establish the earth through the lack of it. An appeal to what is militant can never be as effective as an appeal to what is reasonable, and you are underrating your fellow-countrymen if you think the British people are ever going to be blackmailed.

The leaders of the Party that represent Labour aim at what we all desire: a change for the betterment of the health and happiness of the working man, and equal opportunities given to the less fortunate classes of the community. They are convinced that if they could make the rich poorer, they would make the poor richer; and imagine they are assisting in this crusade by

asking men to do less work in the uncertain and precarious trades of the country. They think there is only a certain amount of wealth and work in the world, which if evenly distributed would make every one happy. To this end they ask the industrious to curb their activities, the clever to act as though they were stupid, and the rich and successful to join the needy and the poor. This does not come from envy; but from misapplied sentiment, lack of education, and a fundamental ignorance of the laws of economy. It is this ignorance that the Liberal Party is out to challenge.

The Tory Party is not only conservative, but conventional. It does not like experiments, and prefers to tolerate the evils it is accustomed to rather than hazard new departures which might be of advantage to some, but which it fears would imperil its prestige. Safety first or "dead slow," which you see printed on high posts to frighten timid drivers, should be its motto; for if you notice, the tardiness of its vision has always protracted its activities, and in the end public opinion has forced the Con-

servative Party to carry out—if it has not already appropriated—Liberal ideas.

The General Strike was a curious illustration of the slowness of the Conservative mind, and the lack of Liberalism among the leaders of Labour.

On the 3rd of May, 1926, the Trades Union Council called a General Strike. The reasons for this dangerous action, though a matter of controversy in detail, are known to all of us, but I shall re-state them.

In July, 1925, a crisis arose in the coal industry which took the Government by surprise, and to avoid a revolt among the miners (and the contingent order for a General Strike), they spent twenty-four millions on a subsidy, which was to expire on the 1st of May, 1926.

Sir Herbert Samuel, at the request of the Prime Minister, undertook to head a commission to report upon the wages, conditions, and grievances of the miners and the owners. During the interval, the Home Secretary, assisted by ardent amateurs, made every preparation for a General Strike.

To Liberals this seemed provocative ; and it made me so unhappy that I wrote a letter to *The Times*. (Had I not received letters at the time expressing approval, I would not republish what I wrote.)

## THE ARMOUR OF PEACE

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES"

SIR,—

We are told we are faced with a great industrial upheaval arising from a struggle between Capital and Labour. To thoughtful men these are one and the same thing, and Abraham Lincoln rightly diagnosed the position when he said in one of his Messages to Congress :

"Labour is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labour, and could never have existed if labour had not existed first. Capital has rights which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. But labour is the superior capital, and deserves much the higher consideration."

Let us make sure labour is receiving this

consideration to-day. We have a Prime Minister who is not bellicose, a Leader of the Opposition who disclaims violence, a Liberal Party—small in representation but large in numbers—all anxious to avoid conflict, and many letters have appeared in *The Times* and other newspapers from leaders of Industry in favour of some personal effort to arrive at a better understanding between masters and men. We have seen a world-felt disaster to one of our armaments at sea, and a triumph for patience and liberalism in the Locarno Treaty; we are approaching Christmas—a festival associated in the hearts and minds of men with love and good-will. Would it not be wiser, instead of boasting of our preparations for revolution, to change our whole armour in favour of Peace?

Yours faithfully,

MARGOT OXFORD.

44 BEDFORD SQUARE,

*Dec. 15th, 1925.*

The public was uneasy, there was nothing to reassure it that the Government was using the

subsidy with discrimination, or working out a scheme of their own which with the good-will of both owners and miners might avert direct action when the crisis arose.

On the 3rd of May, 1926, the Council of the Trade Unions called a General Strike. Who mobilized first is always a question; and as difficult to answer as the old saying: "Which comes first, the owl or the egg?" But it mattered little. What really mattered was the attitude taken by men of all Parties when faced by a great national danger. The boasted freedom of this country was threatened, and every foreign nation was watching us.

London presented a strange spectacle. The newspapers were suppressed; all means of transport—trains, trams, tubes and taxis—were suspended; theatres shut down, and Hyde Park—which was closed to the public—was turned into a gigantic dépôt for the distribution of milk and food. Queues of men, women, and boys from all classes of the community formed up near public offices to volunteer for any service that would be required of them,

and in an incredibly short time the streets were packed by amateurs who took the place of the strikers. Every one's sisters, sons, husbands, and lovers placed themselves at the disposal of the Hospitals and the Government, and private people opened their houses to put up shop-girls and others living at long distances.

However much people blamed the Baldwin Cabinet for its torpid delay during the nine months' interval between the threat and the crisis of the coal quarrel, the dangerous situation created by the General Strike was deeply resented. The dispute in question was lost sight of. It was no longer an industrial quarrel arising out of the incompetence of coal-owners, or the stubbornness of miners—about which most Liberals criticized the owners—but it was a form of blackmail, or collective punishment, levied with indiscriminate cruelty upon the heads of the majority of law-abiding, blameless, and busy people, and falling with peculiar severity upon the poor and the destitute.

The Shadow Cabinet met at Liberal Headquarters on the first day of the Strike. Lord

Oxford—who was leader of the Liberal Party—made his policy clear to his colleagues. He disapproved of the General Strike; and announced his intention of backing the Government to resist this, or any other form of public blackmail. At the time all his colleagues were in agreement with him; but between the first and second Shadow Cabinet Mr. Lloyd George took a move towards Labour; refused to meet his chief in council, and dissociated himself from his colleagues in a letter intended for publication.

There is nothing that marks the difference between a politician and a Statesman more than their conduct in a time of national danger. To take a personal advantage out of political trouble is against all my husband's ideas of public conscience, and he felt he had no choice but to accept Mr. Lloyd George's decision. Although every man of honour would have blamed my husband had he taken any other line in the greatest domestic crisis of our lifetime, his action was resented by a section of the London Liberal Press. Men represented it as undemo-

cratic, and a vigorous campaign was started against him. The word democratic arouses a misplaced enthusiasm. It is better than a dictatorship ; an autocracy ; bureaucracy, or monarchy. At best it is the wisest precaution against any of these. But it is not the Holy Grail. With the exception of the *Westminster Gazette*, the London Liberal Press thought that Lord Oxford should have been in favour of the General Strike and against the Government. In one famous Liberal newspaper the leader writer said my husband had forfeited all title to loyalty :

“When the King turns traitor there are no loyalists left.”

Neither my husband or I have ever believed in the influence of the Press ; and had the abuse been confined to negligible rags, I would not quote this disgraceful passage ; but one or two periodicals of repute wrote in the same strain. They extolled the opportunism that prompted Mr. Lloyd George to desert his chief at a moment of national danger. In a desire to flatter Labour they struck a blow at the

heart of the Liberal belief in freedom and justice.

It was a new idea to me and to many others that all our Liberal boasts of reason as against violence, and hatred of force, were convictions to be repudiated at our convenience. And it easily accounts for the downfall of the Liberal Party.

The calculation of those who were opposed to the policy adopted by my husband and his colleagues at the Liberal Shadow Cabinet was that the General Strike would last a long time, and that Labour would eventually succeed. In which case Mr. Lloyd George, and those in agreement with him, would be free to leave the sinking ship. They thought the Liberal Party was dead; and a new combination of Labour and Liberal would eventually sweep the Tories from power. I may be wrong, but I have never found deserting friends conciliates enemies.

To explain the inner condition of our Party at this time I have to go further back. The General Election of 1918 was an attempt—

which partially succeeded—to assassinate all Liberals of importance. It was succeeded by the worst Government known to our Parliamentary history. Mr. Lloyd George, who was returned and kept in office by the Tories, went in for measures so antagonistic to Liberalism that he succeeded—after nearly killing the Conservative Party—in killing his own Coalition. The Liberals who had survived the massacre of 1918 resolved to preserve their identity in however attenuated a form. Mr. Lloyd George rejoined us in the General Election of 1923 to fight the battle for Free Trade, but while formally joining us he retained his separate fund and separate organization.

Those who objected to the publication of my husband's letter (accepting Mr. Lloyd George's resignation) did not realize that there never had been Unity, nor could there be while there were two funds and two organizations within the Liberal Party. The Asquith group were unable from lack of money to put enough candidates in the field at the last Elections to form an alternative Government. This caused bitter-

ness, and widened the breach which already existed.

When I began this paper my intention was merely to indicate the lines upon which political opinion was divided among leaders of the three great Parties. The events that have taken place in the last three years have, in the interests of truth, obliged me to be more personal.

There is a Greek saying, which translated says :  
“ It is not the part of a wise leech to mutter charms over a wound that needs the knife.”

If the Liberal Party is ever to rise to a great future it must cleanse itself of Crookedness and Fear. It must return to the moral integrity which made it great. And it must run straight. It must not rush either to Labour or Tory hoping to spot a winner ; and it must have a Press of Liberal convictions that is not always wobbling. Wooing other gods does not command respect. The men who repudiated Lord Oxford will do well to engage as their organizers in future men who inspire a similar confidence. Liberalism had a great chance, not only in the General Strike, but on several occasions since Mr. Bald-

win became Prime Minister. But it lacks Principle and it lacks Courage. Devising things that are not Liberal, however clever and ingenious they may be, will not succeed in bringing the Liberal Party into power.

“By Liberal things shall he stand.”



IX

OPPORTUNITIES



## IX

# OPPORTUNITIES

Who lets slip fortune : he shall ever find  
Occasion once past by is bald behind.

COWLEY, *Pyramas Thisbe*.

UPON reflection I think that Opportunities are human ; and have a life of their own. Sometimes they flatter, sometimes they persuade ; they seldom cajole, and never command, and they have their likes and dislikes like the rest of us. Some people would go as far as to say they had favourites. It is certain they are quite as touchy and more unforgiving than individuals, when they find their advances are repulsed. I have often thought it curious why so few people do not try to get into closer touch with them. Instead of courting, wooing, or making friends, not a day passes that you do not see half your acquaintance, and most of your friends, snub and neglect them.

One must in fairness say that Opportunities come in strange and deceptive disguises, and are not too easy to recognize. Some people, knowing they have bad eyes for faces, do not take much trouble; others are not on the watch; while the vast majority are convinced that such Opportunities as they have recognized, have turned out to be wayward and capricious.

I never read *Puss in Boots* without admiring the rôle played by the greatest of all Opportunists, and though it is true that cats have nine lives, this particular Puss is an object lesson in not only seizing, but creating Opportunities.

For the benefit of those who have forgotten the story, I will relate it.

Once upon a time there was a miller who had three sons. He was an ordinary man without much fortune, and with little faith in scriveners or attorneys. When—upon his death—he made his will, there were no witnesses; and though two of his sons felt they had been unevenly, almost unfairly, dealt with, they respected their father's wishes, and refrained from taking legal advice. He left the Mill, and all his property, to

his eldest son ; his Ass to the second ; and his Cat to the third. The poor young fellow was inconsolable at receiving such a meagre inheritance. Sitting pensive, and alone, he said :

“ My brothers will make common stock, and earn their living without anxiety. But for me ! When I have eaten my Cat, and made a muff of his skin, I must die of hunger.”

With the lack of sensitiveness for others, common to young people who are disappointed, he did not perceive that Puss was in the room ; and was startled at his reflections being interrupted :

“ Do not afflict yourself unnecessarily, my good master,” said the Cat. “ You have but to buy me a bag, and some boots, to find I am not such a bad portion as you imagine.”

The master had often observed his Puss play cunning tricks : simulating death, and concealing himself in the meal to catch rats and mice ; and though not building too much upon Pussy’s words, his own prospects were so despairing that he complied with the Cat’s request.

From that moment rash and foolish rabbits, young and succulent partridges, and other game

were caught in the bag, and the enterprising Puss took them to the King; presenting them as presents from his noble master—the Marquis of Carabas. A bathe in the river, and a theft of clothes at a time when His Majesty was taking an airing with his only daughter—a princess famed for her beauty—fitted out the Marquis with a complete wardrobe. Upon a similar occasion, the Princess and the King—accompanied by the Cat as outrider—were informed by the mowers and reapers of every field they passed, that the rich estates belonged to the Marquis of Carabas. All went well; but there was an Ogre living in a castle to whom all these estates properly belonged; and he was vain and proud. Pussy persuaded the guards to allow him to pass, so as to pay his respects at the castle, having told the King he would go on in front to prepare for his reception. Aware of the value of flattery, on being admitted into the Ogre's presence the Cat said:

“I have been assured, Sir, that you have the gift of transforming yourself into any shape you like, from a lion to an elephant.”

Wishing to show his power, the Ogre instantly became a roaring lion, at which the Puss showed much terror.

“I have been moreover informed that you can take on the shape of quite small animals like a rat or a mouse; but I am sure this is not possible!—Nothing will make me believe it,” said the Cat.

Puffed up by pride, and losing all sense of proportion, the Ogre changed himself into a mouse and ran about the floor. At this the Cat instantly fell upon him and ate him up. Hearing the noise of His Majesty’s coach going over the drawbridge he ran out.

“Your Majesty is welcome to the castle of my lord and master, the Marquis of Carabas,” said the Cat, bowing them in. The end came swiftly.

The Marquis married the Princess.

The moral of this story is not the part played by luck, but the Opportunities—slight in themselves—which were seized and improved upon by the Cat.

There is no more fruitful topic of conversation,

or one that excites more controversy, than speculating upon other people's luck.

After listening to the sudden inheritance, unexpected discovery, or unforeseen good fortune that has befallen an acquaintance, the kind of comment you hear is nearly always the same :

“ I have had many rich and intimate friends ! but none of them have ever left me anything in their wills. That old invalid Mr. X—that lived for months at a time with us in the country—with his separate rooms, separate meals, and separate habits, and who was always criticizing the wills of his wealthy friends, why !—he died leaving £40,000 and never even left us a book ! Look at Mr. B—he had not a relation in the world, and knew nothing of his heir, except that he was undesirable and disliked by all who knew him ; instead of leaving some little thing—even if it wasn't money—to that poor woman who read to him, wrote to him and nursed him ; he left everything he had to his rubbishy heir. Look at the women who leave vast fortunes to homes for stray cats in poor suburbs : or to cottage gardens in Swansea. And the rich

people who discover coal or oil in their gardens ; or Van Dycks in their lumber-rooms ! That sort of thing never happens to me ! ”

I never see much point in getting angry with Opportunities, and yet many very damaging things have been written about them. Shakespeare says in the *Rape of Lucrece* :

“ O Opportunity, thy guilt is great !  
'Tis thou that executest the traitor's treason ;  
Thou set'st the wolf where he the lamb may get ;  
Whoever plots the sin, thou point'st the season ;  
'Tis thou that spurn'st at right, at law, at reason ;  
And in thy shady cell, where none may spy him,  
Sits Sin, to seize the souls that wander by him.”

Returning to a less lurid altitude, there is no doubt that at one time or another most of us are apt to think that what we look upon as the absence of purpose in the successive events of life, points to a personal spite on the part of Fortune : and we resent it.

But I am inclined to an opposite opinion.

Life is not a chapter of accidents dependent on a throw of the dice ; nor do Opportunities

visit the inhabited world at random. If you are sufficiently observant you will notice the punctuality of Nature, and an inevitability in the sequence of events that not only points to Order, but to a great Design.

I remember when I was staying at Balliol before I married, being profoundly impressed by hearing an elderly man say in a conversation after dinner :

“I have been entered for the Eternity stakes without my permission, and I’m damned if I’ll run ! ”

I asked the Master (Benjamin Jowett) what sort of a man he was ; and he replied :

“He is a man who has missed every Opportunity.”

I wondered at the time what this could have come from. Was it a lack of drama in his temperament ; a lack of sensibility in his nature ; a lack of determination in his character ; or a lack of wisdom in his judgment ?

Wisdom is shy, and difficult of attainment.

“Man knoweth not the price thereof: neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth said, It is not

in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof . . . the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls, for the price of Wisdom is above rubies."

And in Proverbs iii. 13-20, you read: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. . . . By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew."

From this it would almost seem as if the quest for wisdom presented an insoluble problem. But I do not think the talent for recognizing Opportunities depends entirely upon any of these things. It comes rather from an inner attitude towards life: something in embryo; something creative and capable of development; something that is illumined by an unquenchable light, and set in motion by a determination to keep a steady eye upon "the unspotted mirror of the power of God."

In this connection you need not have any specified creed—indeed, you need not even be religious—but whether you believe it or not, there is a God within us which lightens our darkness.

A God that does not show Himself in raps, taps, or what is called Christian Science—whatever this may mean—but in unsolicited Opportunities ; which we can either claim or reject, and in the choice of which luck plays but little part.

Generally speaking, Opportunities that have been neglected haunt the paths, and strew the memories, of most of us. Ruskin writes :

“ Opportunities are sensitive things ; if you slight them on their first visit, you seldom see them again.”

I do not agree with him : I find they have a way of recurring which proves my theory that they have an existence of their own, and are impervious to the insensibility and numbness of mankind.

To older people the young seem to have the best chance in life ; as having missed what lay at their feet, they have time on their side—time to recover, and to prepare themselves with assiduity for what may turn up in the future. But in point of fact the older we are, the more we should be able to recognize familiar visitors.

Young people can hardly be expected to make friends as rapidly as their elders with newcomers. They have not had the long experience and are impatient.

Experience works very differently upon human beings. You will sometimes hear it said of certain people that they never grow up. Reasons are not given for this criticism, because instinct is stronger than reason : but generally speaking, most of us understand what is meant by the phrase. People who do not grow up are those who have gained little by experience. Life and love, sorrow and pleasure, success and failure, have added nothing to them, and they remain—whether clever or stupid, able or dull, obstinate or fluid, placid or cross—much the same as they were born. Fortunately for the growth of the world these are not often to be met with, and Opportunities harnessed to hope have a large field in which to experiment.

There are some Opportunities at the disposal of all of us. They pay us visits at regular and stated intervals, upon occasions that are hallowed by time, and observed by custom, and to

which we all look forward. The last day of the year knocks at our doors with persistent frequency, and alarming reiteration. It is safe to say that at this time the whole civilized world is united by a common desire, however differently it may be expressed. We all form good resolutions.

In Scotland, when I was young, Christmas was not the great festival it is to-day. This, I imagine, was because church festivals were associated with Roman Catholicism, a religion to which the Scotch have a stronger repugnance than any other nation. Music was considered frivolous ; symbols were looked upon as idols, and choristers, candles, and coloured glass were excommunicated from the Scottish churches. Anything in the nature of beauty, or display, was suspected as being a distraction from the true worship of God. Christmas was looked upon merely as an occasion chosen by the rich to give toys and bundles to the poor, and with the exception of the people on our estate I hardly ever saw a stranger in our church on Christmas Day. Nor would you find a Christmas tree in any but the richest houses.

New Year's Day was a very different affair. The Scottish people are so dour of access that I would hesitate to say what precisely is their inner attitude when concealed under tartan frolics, but the first day of the year excited a curious mixture of sentiment and conviviality, and it was the duty, as well as the pleasure, of my fellow-countrymen to reel the old year out in more ways than one.

I am a great believer in holidays, and do not think one can have too much fun in life. Some people are born with a very poor sense of fun. I do not mean sense of humour, as a good sense of humour is interpreted so variously by different people that it will always be a matter of controversy as to who has, and who has not, got a good sense of humour. We all think we know, which is reassuring—but a sense of humour to be perfect must include yourself as an object of ridicule, and this few men and hardly any woman can tolerate. A sense of fun and enjoyment is quite another affair. I do not mean practical joking, which is always silly and often dangerous, nor do I mean any

form of horse-play, which is always boring and often noisy, but I mean a form of diversion from the business and obligations of daily life; the instinct that makes Government and individuals sacrifice their own interests by having holidays to give rest and pleasure to the general public. Even the Church—which lags far behind the needs and expectations of the most human of us—has ordained that at certain fixed times there should be holidays.

From my youth upwards I have believed in giving children and servants, and all and sundry, as much fun as possible. There are so many inevitable sorrows that we have to encounter in life that if we can alleviate some of them by any conceivable device it is our bounden duty to do it.

Feast-days, fast-days, anniversaries, and holidays are celebrated and observed in varying degrees by Church, State, and families, and every one has a different conception as to how to commemorate these great occasions. The root instinct is that the occasion is greater than the individual, and that one and all should lose

their identity in a joint effort to make things hum. Some are impelled to fall upon their knees and remember God; some to fall upon their heads and forget themselves; while others are content to scatter money or dance strathspeys.

On the morning of the 11th of November, 1918—Armistice Day—I observed young and old, fashionable and frumpy, nurses, beggars, hawkers, students, shop-girls, and workmen dancing in the streets. Flags were improvised, shops besieged, and snatches of song and hymns, intermingled with the sound of guns, filled the air. In the afternoon, thanksgiving services were arranged in most of the big London churches the moment the public was officially informed from the Houses of Parliament that the War had come to an end.

Events as great as this cannot be repeated in a lifetime; but in a minor manner the first day of a New Year is an occasion to commemorate. It heralds the end of a kind of warfare, for few of us can say that in the 365 days that have passed we have not had to combat some sort of enemy.

The power of enemies to hurt us depends upon the resistance with which they are met, and though in every picture that I have seen of St. George, the dragon appears to be too clumsy and visible to need such an excess of armour, I expect the saint knew what he was about.

If the enemy were merely a dragon it would simplify matters ; but it is from invisible foes that we have to keep our armour bright. Many years ago I wrote in my commonplace book :

*“ Those have most power to harm us whom we love :  
We lay our sleeping lives within their arms,”*

and I have often had reason to re-read it. Even among friends you may find an unsuspected dragon.

Just as Christmas Day brings its presents, New Year's Day brings its Opportunities, and new resolutions are formed over which experience has no power. There is nothing more poignant in life than the vitality of human resolutions ; and if we could probe the hearts and minds of the multitude who listen either by starlight, gaslight, or in the dark to the bells

that chime the hours of a night that separates us for ever from the new morning, we should be moved to tears.

When you are young the pages of your life have little written upon them, but as you get older there is hardly a blank sheet left for you to turn over. On each successive sheet there are imprints, sometimes faint, sometimes strong, of the consequences of past actions, and Opportunities that have been neglected.

I have arrived at an age when 365 days are too long a period for me to wait. Every day left to me of life is the beginning of a New Year; and great resolves may be taken in midsummer as well as in midwinter.

Whether we dance the old year out, or pray the new one in, it is certain that if we encourage, recognize, and salute Opportunities, they will not repel us.



X

CHARACTER



X  
C H A R A C T E R

*ἥθος ἀνθρώπων δαίμων*

**W**HY is it that newspaper editors are willing and eager to pay large sums to almost anyone who will write tittle-tattle for them about people?

A prominent film star who can hardly read or write; the daughter of a politician who knows nothing; a famous parson, Peer, or Headmaster; even a good bridge-player, can make considerable sums by writing for the Press if they intermingle with a little light shop, the names, habits, clothes, or sayings of conspicuous persons. It does not much matter if what they write is fatuous or clever, illiterate, vulgar, scandalous or dull, as long as they can tell a gaping world something about well-known people.

I have often felt my heart go out to "well-

known people." They are more to be pitied than the most obscure clerk in an office. *Who* is there that will defend them? What can a handful of friends and relations do against an inquisitive, credulous, misinformed public? You pray for bereaved parents; you pity the struggling poor and the crippled rich; and most of us have a limited amount of sympathy for all who suffer. But who has ever heard of anyone showing compassion to "well-known people"? They are out and alone; flung defenceless upon a callous world, to be devoured by Rumour.

I have read many accounts of public people and events written in the last fifteen years by men of eminence, men of insignificance, and men afraid to sign their names. If a rag or tatter is left of these works—which show a monotonous lack of insight and distinction—for the idle to read in the future, wrong impressions will be formed of nearly every person, as well as of every event that has happened within my knowledge either in drawing-rooms or Downing Street.

Anyone can tell his reader where a man was

born and educated ; who and what his parents were ; what he said, what he did, and what was said about him. If the writer has a famous name or writes well, you will read it ; but neither his name or his style will help you to know what the man he is writing about was really like ; and if history is written with the same lack of perception and knowledge as the characters of the public men I have met, I despair of future generations knowing the truth about anything.

It is permissible to say the men and women who could tell us the truth are not likely to inform the Press or the public, and even if they had the knowledge few have got the mixture of kindliness and perception to convey the truth. Speaking for myself, I prefer, if not the whole truth, all that is possible to be told about the men and women I have known ; and since famous people cannot hope to escape attention, I could wish biographers had a little more courage. There was an outcry against Purcell's "Life of Manning" and Froude's "Carlyle" : even Sir Edmund Gosse's "Father and Son" was

criticized: and to come to a less conspicuous work, my own autobiography was covered with abuse. But I think reticence makes dull reading.

Telling the truth about people is a delicate affair, and as long as it is bad taste to write about the living, unforgivable to write about the dead, and wearisome to recall the forgotten, it will always be a subject of controversy.

Writing about contemporaries should not be criticized as a matter of taste. It should be judged fairly as to whether what is said is fundamentally true, or not.

There are several qualities needed to write either upon yourself, or upon living people. I will not say great qualities—as I possess a few of them—but you must be sincere, affectionate, untouchy, and unself-conscious. Every one should be interested in themselves, or they cannot develop; but self-consciousness is a serious handicap in life. Self-consciousness is a strange malady which is difficult to analyse, but when people say it comes from shyness I demur. I would put it the other way, and say shyness comes from self-consciousness. The excuse for

rudeness is almost invariably the same. People say : " He is not really rude, he is shy." After a few tepid attempts to be civil, a natural lack of humbleness makes the self-conscious give it up, and their own lack of civility makes them shy. No doubt there are people who are born shy : but these have their hands upon their swords and lack courage.

Although the Almighty has made every one of us the same to an eyelash, I have never met two human beings alike. If you go to a studio of good amateurs, and look at their drawings, you will observe that although all their studies are like the model, they are strangely unlike each other. This is not because of the different positions they are occupying—where light and angles, etc., make their drawings differ, but because every artist has his own conception of what he is looking at. It is the same with people. Every one who writes about human beings looks at them from their own angle.

It is natural to want to know what people are really like. But we should have more *interest* than *curiosity*, and discourage vulgar details.

When I was in America I was asked by female reporters—an inferior race to the men—what I could tell them of Princess Mary's underwear. This topic is not sillier than many of the things described and discussed in the Sunday papers in England.

Some writers tell truths that are known to everybody ; some falsify the truth, and a few do not perceive the truth. It is not merely delicacy of perception and close observation, but imaginative insight coupled with an unbelaboured and feeling mind, that are needed if you want to understand your fellow-creatures.

I read in *The Times*, on the 165th anniversary of Nelson's birth, the following passage :

“ Mr. John Scott—public secretary to Nelson—writing to his wife says : ‘ His Lordship is not a Shore Man and never wishes to go out of the ship. There is something peculiar to himself in making everyone happy.’ ”

However many biographies of Nelson men may read, you will find nothing that gives you a better idea of his character and nature than this short sentence.

Talking the other day to a hard-headed City

man I asked him if he liked his partner, with whom he had worked for forty years.

“We get on all right,” he answered, “but there is no blessing about him.” I feel as if I should recognize that man wherever I met him.

It is important that you should free your mind of what has been told you of strangers when you meet them; and it has always been a surprise to me that knowing the inaccuracy of rumour so few people try to do this.

Myths grow up round famous people which it takes bold men to dispel. Loose opinions pronounced by irresponsible people are crystallized, and Samson himself would be helpless to pull down an edifice conceived in Vanity, based on Misconstruction, built on Rumour, and cemented by Gossip. I know nothing more pathetic, when it is not exasperating, than hearing men and women out of reach of what is called “the world” repeating like echoes the hollow rubbish, started in the fashionable circles, which help to form public opinion. Mr. Bonar Law a man “without ambition,” Mr. Asquith a man “without

decision," Lord Curzon a man with "no sense of humour," Lord Northcliffe "a Napoleon," Lord Balfour a man "too interested in philosophy to care for politics," and a hundred other fables culminating in "honest John," an unfortunate appellation for Lord Morley—one of the subtlest men of our time. Men must be judged by their characters and not their conduct, as no man's habitual self covers his whole nature.

Since the days of Christ there have been few original people. An independent point of view, a protest in face of prestige, a departure from current opinion, a movement that is out of step, will generally cause confusion if not annoyance. Public opinion is not trustworthy, and the crowd will always shout for the wrong man. Every one has a different conception of the right man, and all are confident that they know him when they meet him; but do they? We have a few classical guides to help us, but we do not study them. Education, environment, and friends have influenced men and women, but some of the greatest have had little learning,

ugly surroundings and few friends. A liberal education has been well defined :

“ That man, I think, has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of ; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength and in smooth working order ; ready, like a steam-engine, to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind ; whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of nature and of the laws of her operations ; one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience ; who has learned to love all beauty, whether of nature or of art, to hate all vileness, and to respect others as himself.”

It is easier to know what the right kind of man should be than to know what men are. Mathew Pain says :

“The case of Biographers is indeed hard, for if they tell the whole truth they provoke man, and if they write what is false they offend God.”

It is easier to write of men than of women. It is the difference between medicine and surgery. You know where you are with one but not with the other. A woman is born to protect herself, and is not going to let anyone know exactly what she is. The only thing we do know for certain is that she is not like a man—either mentally, morally, or physically. She has quite as much courage and more endurance; she has a finer instinct of what is taking place in the mind of those she talks to; but she is feline, and at all hazards will never give herself away. No amount of observation will ever inform you what a woman is like, but very little will enlighten you about a man. From a sense of self-preservation she feels her friend may at any moment become her enemy, which creates a sense of insecurity unknown to a man, and makes her subconsciously more cruel. She is like a “concealed drive,” which motorists on the high road would do well to take warning

before crossing. She is the sphinx without the secret, which men give up their lives to disentangling. Nature is her secret, and that secret is sex. A great and good woman is probably better than any man, but I have not met them.

If you study the famous men you have met you will find they all treat themselves differently. Some avoid themselves, some dramatize themselves, some pursue themselves, some promote themselves, some listen to themselves, some suspect themselves, some are tender with themselves, some ceremonious with themselves, some pose to themselves, some are absorbed in themselves ; some deafened, some suffocated, and a few embarrassed by themselves.

A man like Mr. Winston Churchill—deeply absorbed but seldom satisfied : self-centred but never self-conscious, though far too forgiving, is not kind to himself. He is hard and unsparing ; and though vigilant and confident, is so short-seeing and impatient that he devours himself.

Mr. Lloyd George loves a crowd more than himself or his friends. Enduring society, soliciting advertisement ; he has chanced, changed,

and challenged himself in the arena of fortune. He guesses without pause what the person he is talking to is thinking ; but while they are stationary he is a movie. In spite of an intelligence amounting to genius, he waylays himself.

Lord Grey has a Self that few can influence and none can force. He treats it seriously in spite of a boyish sense of humour. People do not matter to him ; his intimacies are with birds, trees, and squirrels. He is moody about his platform performances and proud of his country pursuits, and is a man every one is honoured to know.

Mr. Austen Chamberlain is more loyal to his friends than to his convictions. He holds himself a little too rigidly for his own ideas, or other people's, to circulate freely. He is uneven in temperament, but even in affection.

Lord Reading has a lovable and persuasive Self. He has always encouraged mild and persistent ambition, but has never allowed it to obscure his judgment. He is not a man of moods ; but though he has a warm corner for himself he has no cold corners for other people.

The Cecil family have true intimacy with ideals: minds, and morals of distinction, but have subconsciously massaged away some of the more active muscles of their conscience. They are unfamiliar with themselves.

Lord Birkenhead gives himself too much rope: but he will never hang his warm and generous heart. He listens to himself, but his brains—which are of the most remarkable—sometimes go to his head, and he hears confused sounds.

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald watches and defends himself, but whether from strain or suspicion he is not at ease with himself.

Mr. Stanley Baldwin, though perplexed, is unconcerned and enjoys himself.

Lord Oxford avoids himself as much as he shuns advertisement; he ignores his enemies and he knows the world. His sanity amounts to genius. In spite of complete self-mastery, a fundamental emotion betrays his taciturnity, and for those who want sympathy or counsel, he is the man to go to.

Sir John Simon has a lonely uneasy Self. He has never given it any rope. He is as grudging

to himself as he is generous to his friends ; and would lose nothing if he gave himself away.

Lord Curzon's brilliant natural Self made many friends in his youth, but for some puzzling reason he grafted on to that hospitable Self a certain ceremonious non-conducting personality which estranged his early intimacies ; and his sense of humour, which was of the highest quality, was never focused on himself. He set an example to the world of tireless industry, unswerving courage, and a life dedicated to the public service ; but he overlooked the power of love.

It is a mistake to suppose that any of us can have much power without the capacity to love. Personal relations are life—very nearly the whole of life—and to neglect them is to ensure not only loneliness but defeat. Some people get more than they give ; others give more than they get ; but in the long run we only get what we give in life. Leaders of men are not necessarily clever or merely men of action, they are men who stir the imagination, and seize the hearts of their fellow-creatures to such a pitch that they would follow them to death.

It is difficult to account for the prominence of certain men that we have all known.

Accident, destiny, luck, contrast, circumstance, and character all contribute to bring them into prominence.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's immobility, laziness, and single meaning were admirable foils to Lord Balfour's indulgent, dexterous, and brilliant intellect; much in the same manner—though for different reasons—as Gladstone was a foil to Disraeli. An unpopular war made Campbell-Bannerman more prominent than famous. But he was trusted.

In times of Party division and colliding ambitions, a man like Mr. Bonar Law—in spite of Parliamentary gifts and little faith—appeared to be almost smuggled into prominence. Lord Curzon with every justification pranced into it; Lord Oxford worked into it; and the present Prime Minister appeared to be blown into it.

But Mr. Baldwin is loved: and in spite of a lack of grip on his noisier colleagues, he has the rarest of all qualities: he is fundamentally humble. He gained his ground with the public

when he said in his last speech of the session of 1923 (when the policy of the French occupation of the Ruhr was under discussion): "Deep down in every British heart, irrespective of Party, lies a profound sense of what they believe to be right."

Froude says: "History is a voice for ever sounding across the centuries the law of Right and Wrong. Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on tablets of Eternity. Justice and Truth alone endure."

You often hear people say: "He is a brilliant fellow but he has no judgment," but when you ask them to define judgment they cannot do it.

John Addington Symonds once said to me: "A man with appreciation, industry, and education can make himself almost anything. He can even give himself a sense of humour; but unless he is very exceptional he cannot give himself judgment—which means character."

I protested vigorously against this at the time, and said the one thing I thought certain in life was that you could improve your character, but

as I grow older my faith gets dimmer and I sometimes wonder if he was not right.

Many years ago I read in an American book, whose author I have forgotten :

“It is easier to prepare a man for the next world than for this, and it was a cold day for the clergy when they were expected to do both.”

Observing as I have done the deterioration that has taken place in the characters and intellects of some of my early friends I think if we can go back, we can go forward, and I still believe it is possible to improve our characters. It is too close a contact with Self that is the chief obstacle. If you are too close to an object you do not see it in its true proportions, and Self is an inadequate object to fix the gaze upon. Trying to help other people is never popular unless you can get them a carpet, a servant, a motor, or money.

Every week of my life I hear people say : “My dear ! what good can I do ? Governessing only alienates. How can I hope to succeed where experience has failed ! People don’t change.”

This is not true ; the thief upon the cross contradicts it. Nor should success be the test, for I presume most of us would do the right thing if it met with success. But it is due to our own Love—if we have enough—to help our friend. The Pilates who wash their hands of other people's affairs are always with us, but they are not the people we turn to in the crises of life. We do not want them when we are happy ; we shun them when we are sad ; in moments of love we avoid them, and in moments of death they avoid us.

If we had enough Love we could do a great deal for one another. But while preaching the religion of Christ, no Church has ever attempted to practise it ; and I believe that Love and Love alone will change our characters, and build the bridge that can span our incommunicable lives.

XI

MARRIAGES



# XI

## MARRIAGE

“Marriage and hanging go by destiny : Matches are made in Heaven.”—*Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy*.

IT is said that marriages are made in Heaven. When it was said ; by whom it was said ; and upon what occasion it was said, I do not know. I am not interested in either the date or the author : what I am concerned about is to try and discover if the saying is a paradox, a platitude, or a fallacy ; and for this purpose I propose to examine it. What is instructive is seldom entertaining ; and platitudes are listened to with impatience. In justice to them it must be said there are only a few people in the world who ever listen very thoroughly to anything ; and though I personally like shop of all kinds as a topic of conversation, I have met very few who do. Platitudes are listened to with yawns ; paradoxes with surprise ; and fallacies with pleasure.

There are no more fruitful topics of controversial discussion, or that lend themselves to more wit, whimsies, laughter, or phrases, than fallacies. Every one takes a different view of them, and what is a fallacy to one person is a truth to another, and *vice versa*.

Intelligent discussion is the best means we have of exposing our own natures and reflections, and of giving us an insight into other people's. The object of a good talker should not be to score, but to try and find the truth; and the essence of platitudes is that they are true, and the only reason people object to them is because they are obvious. But if fallacies inspire, paradoxes behead good conversation, and to earnest people who are not misled by smart and brilliant talk, platitudes have a chubby, solid value of their own; and should not be despised. They are homely and recognized guides to our earliest knowledge of life, and are more reliable than half the proverbs, and most of the sayings we are brought up to believe in.

For instance: "There is no smoke without

fire" has often turned out to be not only untrue, but a bitter disappointment to gossips and tale-bearers. I have seen conflagrations both social, political, and domestic blaze up without the warning of a single puff; and dense smoke fly up to Heaven without any corresponding tongue of flame. "A rolling stone gathers no moss" is also a little puzzling. Is it meant to be a reflection on the stone, or the moss? How can you gather anything if you do not move? and is gathering moss to be your chief ambition in life? "It is colder in a thaw than a frost" is equally fallacious. If you ask the people "of no fixed abode" who spend their nights upon the Thames Embankment, which they prefer—a frost or a thaw—I fancy there would be no doubt about their answer. I could cite endless examples of flaws in the sayings and proverbs we are accustomed to listen to, and which pass as true. Whether accurate or not, it is a comforting idea to think that marriages are made in Heaven, and while not going quite as far as that I am inclined to think—writing with an open mind and after long observation—that

there are more marriages that have turned out well than otherwise. Perfect successes are rare ; partial failures are to be seen ; but complete fiascos only loom large because they are copy for newspapers. They are not as common as the cynics would have us believe.

I have met a few individuals both male and female who having eschewed matrimony, have led interesting lives, and been a joy, a benefit, and an inspiration to their fellow-creatures. These are to be found more often among women than men, but they are rare ; and allowing for the qualities that have given them influence I think if they were asked to-day whether in living their lives over again their choice would have been the same, most of them would say they would rather have been married and had a home, and children. Those who question this, will say I am speaking for myself, and they will be right : I would never presume to speak for anyone else ; and can only say I myself would rather have been unhappily married than never been married at all.

However many dilettanti you may find among

the wedded, bachelors and spinsters will always remain amateurs. They may have been granted a high or a low form of love, but they have been denied one of the greatest of all human experiences.

I read in an interesting book by R. G. Collingwood called *Speculum Mentis* the following sentence :

“For love and marriage and the procreation of children are, every time they happen, a voyage of discovery.”

And those who have not taken this voyage have been cheated out of not only one of life's greatest adventures, but one of its most sacred romances.

The man who in all essentials has been faithful to his mistress will say :

“What does it matter whether I marry the woman I love and live with, or not? I have all the companionship, pleasure, interest, and affection without the burden or the monotony of matrimony ; and I have none of those devastating ties of legitimacy which I see fraying the nerves, and hampering the freedom, of most of the married men of my acquaintance.”

As a matter of experience there is no tie more burdensome and exacting in the life of a man or a woman than that of an illegitimate affection. If either of them are married it means endless duplicity or concealment, and a structure of what are called white lies, which are embarrassing to the memory, demoralizing to the character, and hampering to the movements—and from which it is difficult, if not impossible, ever to escape. If the man is a good sort of fellow he will not enjoy the freedom he has gained at the expense of his wife's faith in him, and if he is a bachelor he will live in constant dread that pressure from his mistress may ultimately make an honest man of him.

Irregular relations undermine the confidence, distract the attention, split the home and spoil the person. You may argue that an unhappy marriage will do all this and more, as it entails expense and charges on your hospitality to your in-laws, which are not only irritating but which may make serious inroads upon your income. But if there are children—which after all is one of the main purposes of Marriage—

there will be a different kind of element: a collective love of a mutual responsibility that binds people together, and has a hold which it is impossible to over-estimate. I have often seen husbands and wives on the most unhappy terms drift together over their children. A man may do his duty by his illegitimate offspring, but it is often more of a sacrifice than a pleasure, and it is his own children, those known by his friends and loved by his household, that he takes pride in. It is certain that the legal expression of "encumbrance" would never have been invented by a mother.

My clever old friend, the late Mrs. Earle—the mother of Sir Lionel Earle of the Board of Works—in discussing these questions once said to me she thought every woman should be allowed at least one baby without loss of reputation. Loving all cradled things as I do, I prefer this to the modern propaganda of birth control. To make immorality easy by facilitating self-gratification while robbing it of its full consequence will never make a nation great. In my experience it is not the *only* children that

have made the greatest mark upon life, but the members of large families. You can rely upon the selfishness of the rich not to over-populate the world, and no doubt the poor should be allowed the same knowledge as the rich in all medical matters, but I dislike public interference with private concerns. If there were more clinics to promote dancing instead of public-houses to encourage drinking, there would be less talk about birth control. I dare say the day will come when a Government may ration the wedded as to how many children they will be permitted to have, just as we were rationed over sugar in the War, but I have seen more marriages fail, and more homes darkened, by no children than by the biggest families.

There is nothing more poignant and mysterious than the word "home," and I doubt if free love in the most perfect surroundings is not imprisonment compared to the love, laughter, and sacrifices of the large families in poor homes.

The marriages that Heaven might disclaim are those where Nature has denied the orchestral accompaniment of children to the duties, respon-

sibilities, drudgery, and monotony of everyday life.

It was fashionable in my youth for girls of eighteen and boys under twenty-five to marry. Given that the fortune was sufficient, parents seemed to be proud that their offspring should be translated suddenly from the inexperience of the schoolroom to the responsibilities of a household. So far from welcoming the experience gained by love affairs, they were under the impression that an early marriage would remove their children from temptation, and themselves from anxiety. The parents of to-day are more sensible ; and both men and women can marry at any age they like, and preferably after they have gained a certain amount of knowledge of one another.

"*La femme de trente ans*" was looked upon not only as a work of fiction, but of phantasy. That any woman of the age of thirty could upset the masculine sense and excite his desire was as incredible as to say a man of seventy could win a championship at golf. The author was either pulling your leg or expounding his paradoxes. Would anyone to-day assert that girls were at the

height of their power—either physical, moral, or intellectual—before the age of twenty-five?—or that married women were faded at thirty? There is nothing that has changed so much within my own recollection as the estimate of years; and the health or vitality of people between the ages of forty and sixty. In early memoirs men and women of sixty were relegated to arm-chairs near the fireside; whereas now they hold their own—if not in games—in most of the interests and many of the pursuits of young people.

I think it was Thackeray who said any woman without an actual hump can marry any man she likes. The only saying that corresponds to this in the fortunes of the male is what Wilkes said of himself: "I will give any man ten minutes' start of me with any woman in the world and beat him."

As he was the ugliest man ever known, he must have had a large and successful experience to have had such immense self-confidence.

It is difficult to say which of the two sexes is the more persistent, but I am inclined to think women are. They have more courage, thicker

skins, and less sense of humour. Who has ever heard of a man bringing an action for breach of promise of marriage against a woman ; and if he did, what sort of sympathy would be extended to him ?

The spirit of the times and custom have had a considerable influence in determining the best way for a man to propose. The habit of putting a woman upon a pedestal obliged the lover to place himself at her feet ; and he would have looked upon her as lacking in feminine attributes had she been foolish enough to receive his advances in a natural manner. The ladies of the eighteenth century had to swoon at sight, assume the vapours, or eat in their bedrooms if they were to satisfy their wooers that they were truly feminine and worthy of their steel. The love-making of this period reminds us of a minuet. Chivalrous approaches, bashful withdrawals and a neutral deference paid to form. Any betrayal of emotion was regarded as an extravagance, and the only indulgence permissible to the romantic was to propose upon their knees.

During the last eighty years the romantic movement has been slowly destroyed—whether by realism in literature, futurism in painting, discord in music, the fading of the aristocrat, the success of the millionaire, or the vulgarity of the journalist, I do not know. But women no longer desire to be loved as ideals; they have an urgent longing for something less artificial and more sincere, and the best of them want to be loved for themselves. It is difficult to imagine the young woman of the present day with her shingled head, short petticoats, and imitation jewels being melted by seeing the most ardent lover expose himself to ridicule by kneeling at her feet.

There are newer and less primitive ways of ingratiating yourself in the affections of a woman, but perhaps the strangest ever recorded in any love-letters are those of "Jemmy Boswell," as Dr. Johnson liked to call his famous biographer. Mr. Geoffrey Scott in an admirable little volume quotes Boswell's letters declaring his feelings for Belle de Zuylen, or Madame de Charrière as she was afterwards called. It would perhaps

truer to say he was describing her feelings for him, but I will leave it to my readers to judge for themselves.

On page 32 in *The Portrait of Zelide*, you will find one of the most original love-letters ever penned.

“As you and I, Zelide, are perfectly easy with each other, I must tell you that I am vain enough to read your letters in such a manner as to imagine that you really was in love with me, as much as you can be with any man. I say *was*, because I am much mistaken if it is not over before now. . . . You have no command of yourself. You can conceal nothing. You seemed uneasy. You had a forced merriment. The Sunday evening that I left you I could perceive you touched. But I took no notice of it. From your conversation I saw very well I had a place in your heart, your letters showed me that you were pleasing yourself with having at last met a man for whom you could have a strong and lasting passion”

Later in the same letter he says :

“Own, Zelide, that your ungoverned vivacity *may* be of disservice to you. It renders you less esteemed to the man whose esteem you value . . . I would not be married to you to be King. . . . My wife must have a character directly opposite to my dear Zelide.”

In spite of this unpromising introduction, he goes on to declare his love and beg her to defend

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## M A R R I A G E

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limb, or a part; but the whole of man's Self, and it is for this reason that I think it can only be tested by the sacrifices and sanctity of Marriage.